MOTHER WEST'S NEIGHBORS

BY

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PREFACE.

THEY are greatly mistaken who imagine that mission work in our cities can be done only by the rich, who can win hearts and open them to the story of the Cross, by their gifts.

Indeed, the spirit of our people often shrinks from the visits of those whose homes contrast so strongly with their own, and rebel against anything that seems to savor of patronage. They may doubt the possibility of those who never knew a want, and who never felt the weight of a frown, entering with sympathy into their deep poverty, or pitying their wanderings from the straight path.

We doubt not this feeling is carried too far by the honorable poor, who have struggled vainly for honest independence; but there it is.

To such persons the most welcome visitor may be one who has passed through the same discipline, and who comes to share what he now has with them. God only knows the holy work wrought in the garrets and cellars of our own city by these hidden workers, of whom the world is not worthy !

It is, however, not the lack of gold, any more than it is the possession of it, which fits the Christian for work among the unfortunate and erring. A rich man may be humble and pitiful, and a poor one may be proud and heartless ; it is he or she who goes to the suffering as men to men, as women to women, those who live nearest to Christ, who will, in the great harvest, bring in the heaviest sheaves with rejoicing.

The characters and scenes in this little book are not mere fiction. We have among us missions, from which weary toilers, overburdened with work, are calling in vain for helpers. There are dark, damp cellars, where, amid foul air and often fouler moral surroundings, pale little chil-

dren, with immortal souls, are wearing away life, or growing up to curse the generation to come. They call to us in the name of Him who blessed little children, to come and save them.

There are dens of vice within bell-sound of our most elegant mansions and churches, where lights glare, and where the viol, attuned to ribald songs, breaks the stillness of the small hours ; where the ringing glasses, filled to the brim with death, sound like the clanking of Satan's chain ; and where God's name is uttered only in oath and curse.

And down there, among the shadows of death, noble men and pure-hearted women are toiling day and night for Christ, with very few to hold up their hands, or to give them even a word of cheer.

Here then, at our very doors, is work for all who love to work with Christ ; a broad harvest waiting for laborers. Here the most degraded press in where the Gospel is preached, and in one place they hang round the Sunday-school,

and then go away because there are not teachers enough to lead them all to Christ! This is in Christian Boston.

If every church in our city would send one laborer, man or woman, rich or poor, into these missions at our door, the districts which now fill our jails and prisons would soon blossom as the rose, with purity and peace.

We all know what Christ has done for us; what are we now doing for Him? He did not scorn to breathe out His pure life between two thieves; shall we scorn to spend a little of our leisure and a little of our substance among those who are far from God?

HILLSIDE AVENUE, Boston Highlands,
March 7th, 1876.

MOTHER WEST'S NEIGHBORS.

I.

GUPTIL ALLEY.

A CITY pastor, in seeking for a poor parishioner one bright June morning, turned into a narrow, dark "court," the condition of which was a shame to any Christian community. Alas, that the religion of so many leads them to seek — for the poor — bliss in heaven, without any reference to comfort on earth!

A group of ragged children were playing with a headless doll, on a door-step; another, of larger and more ragged ones, were kicking an old boot about, by way of a foot-ball, and shouting with all the ardor of champions in nobler games; neglected little babies, wondering what they had ever been born for, were moaning or shrieking within doors; while careless mothers were leaning idly out of their windows, chatting with and cajoling each other, as

if there were neither work nor want in the world.

An old man with a wooden leg sat eating his breakfast, preparatory to making his morning raid on the charitable, who bought shoe-strings of him, because he needed, but did not ask for, money.

"Where can I find a Mrs. West in this court, sir?" asked the minister of the shoe-string peddler.

"A Mrs. Weston ye mean? Do she hact the beggar in the theatre, sir; and 'ave she a daughter who dance there? 'Er name is not West."

"No, it is an old woman who has been injured by a fall lately, for whom I am looking."

"Oh, bless yer 'eart, sir, I know who ye want! it's the hold saint that we calls Mother Watson,' because she live with 'er daughter, — Jim's wife, you know?"

"I never heard of him," replied the minister.

"Thank 'Eaven for that, sir!" cried the old man, catching off his hat, a mark of respect he had not thought of showing his poor breakfast.

"Jim is the meanest, hevilest, and unkindest man alive, sir; though it 's said 'e war once a gentleman like."

"Then you know Mrs. West, do you?" asked the minister.

"'Deed, sir, I 'ave reason to know 'er! She 'ave done more for me nor 'ave this 'ole Christian city beside! She 'elps me, she smiles on me, she pities me; and I 'ave my surmises, — 'twixt ye and me, sir, — that she do pray God to pity and bless 'er poor cripple neighbor. It seem, sir, as hif the likes o' them two women ought to be favored o' Heaven, place o' bein' tormented by such an evil one as Jim Watson! 'E drinks and 'e gambles and 'e leads other men into them same evil things. If them women put 'im up every time 'e break the law, 'e'd spend the rest o' his nat'ral life in jail."

"Poor women!" sighed the minister.

"Well, I 'm not so sure o' that, sir! They be so lifted above hother folk, that everybody 'ere henvies them. Fire and water don't usual live together in peace, nor yet do angels and dev — beg yer pardon, sir, them hother kind I mean, — 'bide quiet together. But that old woman she do live 'oly among sinners."

"That is a beautiful testimony. Now please tell me, my good friend, where I shall find her," asked the minister, impatient to be at his work, and forgetting, perhaps, that he was even then at work.

"Hup there, sir, in that top room, over there, where you see the flowers and the vines; see, sir?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Well, but a word more afore ye go, — maybe ye don't yet know all about Granny Watson, as we call 'Mrs. West.'"

"No."

"Well, she is — but la, sir, it would take me a week to tell ye what she is! In a word, sir, she 's an angel among the darkest and sorriest set ye ever see. Do ye think the Lord do sometimes send them ones down here in the form o' humans?"

"He gives many of His children grace to live above the sin around them, and to glorify Him in the flames of poverty and sorrow."

"Aye, 'E do that same for 'er — the Lord love 'er! But I'm 'inderin' both myself and ye, sir; I thank ye for the honor o' listening so pa-

tient to a poor shoe-string peddler, with a small supply o' brains."

And he clapped on his old hat and went on with the business before him — eating a poor cold breakfast.

Stairs are among the sorrows of the very poor, and the good minister felt it when he had mounted four long flights in search of his old parishioner, who, although her name had stood for years on the church book, was almost a stranger to him. She had neither demanded nor asked attention from him ; and therefore, in the pressure of work and care, had received none.

The entries and stairs were all untidy except the last flight and flat. A new spirit seemed to reign there, and the cloud rose from the good man's heart when he heard the cheerful " Come in," of the old lady, in answer to his knock.

The room was a barely furnished kitchen ; but it was redolent with that magic power called "faculty," whereby some rare women turn dens and hovels into homes. The aged woman sat there performing some light task, but when she saw her honored visitor, she rose, and by the

help of a chair, which she pushed before her, ushered him into an inner room, which was her own. Such taste and order marked the place, that he forgot the surroundings, — unconsciously dropped the mingled air of the pastor and the patron, and assumed that of the gentleman in the drawing-room.

He had often grasped the hand of the tall old parishioner in the poke bonnet, but never before that of the graceful hostess, who now made him forget her garret, her rusty gown, and her coarse cap. Often had he felt himself among inferiors when in the gilded homes of wealth; now he was with an equal in a garret, at the farther end of Guptil Alley!

"I owe you an apology for not seeking you out before; but I only yesterday heard of your being laid up," he said.

"I hope you were with those more dependent on outside comforters, and less fortunate than I," was the quiet reply of Mother West.

The minister started, and involuntarily looked about him, as if to ask, "Who is less fortunate?" but there was nothing to contradict her words of content. A breath of June air came to him

over the flowers in the window; and a row of time-browned volumes smiled on him from a shelf above — old volumes such as only noble souls enjoy, — Bunyan, Rutherford, Baxter, Edwards, and later ones of like spirit.

The minister hardly knew how to begin comforting her, she seemed so lifted above the need of his ministrations. So he asked in a neighborly way, "What family have you, Mrs. West?"

"I have only one child living, sir, a frail young creature, that needs just the comfort you could give her if she were only here. Some way, my words fall short of comforting her. She always says, 'Oh, mother, you are so far beyond me that you cannot feel my weakness.' She's seen me go through such seas without being overwhelmed, that she thinks me tempest-proof, poor thing."

"How long have you lived here, Mrs. West?"

"Three years, sir. Before that we lived in Weldon Street, in quite a different place. When my children were about me I had a lovely little home in the country, with enough

income to meet all reasonable wants and— but"—

"But you lost it?"

"Yes, we lost it; but the loss was small compared with the circumstances that brought it about," she replied.

Again there was silence, and the air, laden with perfume from the flowers, came in at the window again, and the old books seemed to smile on him.

"My child married with my consent and my blessing," she began, "and I placed my little property in her husband's hands as if he had been my own son. He soon grew weary of a quiet village, sold my home, and brought us to the city. I need not tell you the sad steps by which we went down, after we found out how cruelly we had been deceived by him. Here we are with nothing earthly left but our honor. My daughter goes out to work on a machine, for she will not eat bread earned by sin. We pay the rent, buy our food, and clothe ourselves. My son-in-law comes and goes when he pleases; and we do all we can to make a cheerful home for him."

"But what can *you* do, — so old and feeble?"

"Oh, sir, I've had deft fingers in my day, and they have not lost all their cunning yet! While I could do so I worked on 'ready-made clothing;' afterward I found work that accomplished more good for others, if not so much for myself. I manage to do our little work here, and when that is done I mend for those in this great house who cannot or will not do it for themselves. In that way I have made myself friendly with the poor things, and know all their hearts. Those who can, pay me; and those who cannot, thank me and love me for it. Oh, sir, this humble work has opened strange stories to me, and given me ways of blessing others I should never have had without it. There's a poor old Englishman, a cripple, living in the alley, and struggling bravely to earn his bread; I do my part with my needle, and in gratitude to me he has given up drinking ale and taking the name of God in vain. He has not been in a church for twenty years, and is ashamed to go alone now. But if I am ever able to walk again, I hope to get him into the house of God; you will see him there some day."

"But in all this struggle does your son-in-law do nothing?"

"Would to Heaven he simply 'did nothing,' sir. He has a place in this alley where young men meet, and drink and gamble and revile holy things. He has plenty of money; and were we not what we are, by birth and training and the grace of God, we might fold our hands and eat the bread of idleness earned by sin. But God has kept us above that."

"Why don't you both leave him, and live at peace by your own work?"

"Because he has a soul, sir. He is my daughter's husband, and she cannot give him up for lost. I feel that perhaps God sent him to me for salvation. It's a hard trial, sir, but only suppose that at last I should be able to present him blameless before the Father? Isn't that worth trying for? Oh, sir, we all do too little to save those who are far below us, — the drunkard, the gambler, and those even viler than they — if that can be. Perhaps we should never labor for such if we were not whipped to the work as I have been. We have gone down step by step, after this poor young

man, and have managed, thus far, to keep hold of him without defiling our own garments. I expect to see him saved yet, sir, as I have seen others around me. I am gathering my little harvest in this hard, stony field. If you will come here some Monday evening I will show you my sheaves. You may not think them very comely ones, but they are lovely to me and to Him who has honored my work among these poor neighbors. I have one, a poor negro, who was once far down, but now the wisest saint I know might be glad to serve him with a cup of cold water; he is so like Christ! I have had a cripple boy, a heart-broken woman, and many others in this poor court, given to me; and of late I have had visits from ladies, asking me about my poor neighbors, and getting counsel and help in their charities. I have been long working under ground; but I begin to see a task before me in the light."

While the minister was walking home, he wondered in his heart, which were greatest in the kingdom of heaven, God's more public servants, honored for their work's sake, and sur-

rounded by strong Christian helpers, or these hidden ones, who, like Mother West, are "working under ground" and alone for the souls Christ came to save.

BEAUTIFUL TOMMY.

MOTHER WEST had never presumed to ask a visit — and hardly to hope for one — from him who had the care of hundreds of souls. When he had come of his own accord and rejoiced in her joys and entered into her sorrows, it seemed as if an angel had been to her poor home, and, departing, had left a heavenly influence there. The flowers looked fresher, and the air, which swept in over high chimneys and roofs, seemed purer the next day ; and her heart was strangely lifted above the trials which so often caused her to wonder at God's ways.

Oh, if God's ministers only knew the joy their presence gives in the homes of the poor, and the blessings which there await themselves, they would not so readily pass such work and its rewards into the hands of lay-helpers.

At parting with his parishioner the minister had received a promise of seeing her "Beautiful Tommy" the next time he came.

And now he was mounting those many flights of stairs again, with the vague image of "Beautiful Tommy" before him — a fair, pale child with pearly complexion and sunny hair; such a flower as now and then springs up and struggles on — seeming strangely out of place — amid poverty, coarseness, and sin. But it was no such fairy-like creature that met his eyes as he entered the room. "Beautiful Tommy" was a short, stumpy colored man, whose crisp locks were already white around his temples. He sat by a table, pointing out his letters with a knitting-needle and calling them aloud.

"Tommy, close the book. Here's the dear minister," said Mother West.

Tommy had no idea of losing his place when it was so hard to find again; so he tore a bit from the margin of a paper lying by him, and placed it between the leaves. Then he turned round and with a low bow said, "I've heerd you preach forty time, sir, but I never 'spected

to grasp your hand! I's mighty honored, sir!"

"But if you've been to my church so often, how comes it that I've never seen you, my friend?" asked the minister kindly.

"Oh, sir, it's bekase I keeps out o' sight — pretty gineral — to the furder end o' the orgin, and kind o' behind it; and I thought de rich ones would n't be pleased fer to see me dar."

"But they would be, and so would I, my friend," said the minister.

"The saxtant told me they had gi'n heaps o' money for the col'd folks to have a church o' their own, and now they 'spected 'em to keep to it. I went dar, but somehow 'noder de Lord did n't speak through dat bruder, as He did through you, to my soul."

"And have you got good to your soul there, Tommy?"

"Got good to my soul, sir? yes, and to my body too. I don't guess your people knows what's been in dat ar' church, like I does. Mrs. West, she says it's 'de gate o' heaven' to her soul; but I tells her it's been heaven itself to mine!"

By this time Tommy had forgotten the weight of honor with which this visit had at first oppressed him; and rising up he exclaimed, "Oh, sir, if I could only once stan' up in dat ar' pulpit and tell 'em what I 's seen dar when dey was fannin' deirsel's and shaking deir jewl'ry 'bout and yawnin', they would be 'mazed! Oh, sir, God comes powerful mighty into His own house."

"Tommy," said Mrs. West, "the minister came on purpose to talk to you to-night. Now you must listen."

"No, Mrs. West, I came to hear him talk;" said the good man. "Now sit down, Tommy, and tell me who you are and all about the glory you have seen."

Thus far the good man had been standing; but Mrs. West offered him the only large chair in the room — one covered with a gay chintz, with a snowy towel pinned neatly over the back of it.

"Dat ar napkin was put on clean for you — like givin' a cup o' cold water, you know."

The minister smiled and sat down. "Now, Tommy, let me hear your story," he said.

"Well, sir, I was borned in slavery as you may see by my ignorance; and I was borned in sin too. I don't 'member no fader, no mammy; but only de folks in de kitchen and massa's people in de big house. Some of de black folks prayed, and some on 'em swared; and some agin, did both, — as de 'casion required. But massa he was an awful sinner; and so was the young gent'men! Dey used teach de little black chil'n to chaw tobaccy and to swar' and to lie; and used to give us boys brandy till we made fools of oursel's for deir sport!

"So I growed up. I had a powerful sperit in me; and massa said, one time, dat he'd break either my will or my neck. But he did n't do nather! I runned off and come North, — as big a heathen as grows away off in them foreign places.

"I thought everybody was agin me here, and watchin' a chance to send me back to my massa. I was afeared o' policemen and of everybody with good clothes on; so I begged of beggars, and slept under carts — and such like, and now and then picked up a job.

"One day a child hailed me, and axed me did I want to lug a ton of coal up four flights o' stairs ; and dat ar coal, sir, was dis blessed lady's ! And it was de preciousest load ever I lugged ! It was mighty hard afore I got through, special' as I had n't had no breakfast on'y a doughnut and an apple. I axed her mought I sit down on de stairs and rest a bit, kase I was faint. She said, 'Come in here and sit down, and drink some hot coffee and eat a good breakfast and rest long 's you want to.'

"'How much will you ax me ?' says I.

"'Nothin',' says she.

"'Who 'll pay you for 't, then ?' says I.

"'Our Fader in Heaven, what feeds the ravens,' says she.

"'Missus, you 's foolin' !' says I.

"'No, bruder, I is n't,' says she. 'You look sick and tired. De Lor' has sent me enough and more than enough for dis day's bread ; and I 'll share it wid you for His sake.'

"'For *whose* sake ?' says I.

"'Why, for Christ's sake,' says she.

"'Oh phoo !' says I. 'I'se heard lots o' pra'rs wound up, "for Christ's sake ;" but I never seen nothin' done for His sake.'

"'Do you love Him?' says she.

"'I ain't acquainted with Him,' says I.

"'Poor, dear soul!' says she, as tender as if I was a sick baby. I looked at her, sir, and I thought her face was shinin' like silver! By dis time she had spread a white cloth on dis 'ere table, and put bread and meat and coffee on to it. She axed me to sit by, and she sat down too and axed de Lord to give me daily bread, every day; and to give me de bread o' heaven, too. I tell you, sir, I was n't half so wicked when I got dat breakfast eat up! I was ready to hear 'bout God, as I was n't wid that awful gnawin' inside o' me!

"Well, sir, she got a chance for me to live in dis yere cellar kitchen. And then she got jobs for me. She began to teach me to read; and she got me warm clothes — dat was winter time — and mor'n dat she allus called me 'friend' or 'bruder.' Every time I looked at her, or 'membered of her, I thought o' her words — 'for Christ's sake;' and soon I begun to think dis yere Christ was worth lookin' arter! And I looked arter Him. I sarched for Him in de dark; and by'm-by I found

Him; and here I is to-night, sir, Happy Tom! I would n't change places wid old massa as he was afore de war; but if I knowed whar' to find him and de young gent'men I'd walk down to Nor' Ca'liny, and I take 'em all in my arms and carry 'em to Jesus. I lóve de whole worl', sir, wid such love dat it 'pears like I would n't go to heaven widout takin' dem all long wid me!"

"Tell the minister where you first found Christ, Tommy," said his patron.

"In your great church, sir. I 'd been many days a sarchin' for Him, and cryin' for Him, when one Sunday mornin' I crep' in by de orgin and yur preached, 'He is nigh unto every one o' you.' And just at dat minute 'peared like de roof was lifted off, and I see Him comin' down in de clouds. He come and stood by side o' me, and I was in heaven, sir! I looked down and see de gran' folks all calm — like jis as if nothin' had happened. Dey fanned and yawned and shuk deir ear-rings, and did n't know Christ was dar! I did n't hear no more dat you say, dat day; but when de church broke up, I come home, like I had company all de time by my side."

"And ever since that day, sir, he has been doing something 'for Christ's sake.' Not a day passes but he lugs up coal, or brings water, or tends a baby for a tired mother, or gives food to the needy. If every one who names the name of Christ did as much in proportion to his ability as Tommy does, there would soon be no poverty in the world. I 've learned, and am still learning sweet lessons from him. Strangers round here call him 'Black Tom;' but I call him 'My beautiful Tommy;' and I know he is beautiful in the eye of Him who has redeemed him and set His seal upon him."

III.

KITTY McCOSH.

MANY whose lot has been cast on the flower-clad hills of life, imagine that all in the valleys below them is misery, gloom, and discontent; that peace never lurks among shadows, nor joy among the mists. But this is not so. God giveth to all men liberally. His refreshing rains and His life-giving sunbeams pierce the clouds of poverty and feebleness; and light up many a poor home, which to the charitable visitor seems devoid of all comfort. The cases are very rare where life has no present joy, no alluring hope.

Across the end of Guptil Alley were three houses whose doors opened directly from the brick sidewalk, and were protected from the invasion of horses by a rude railing, a few feet from the front windows. This railing had its disadvantages. The boys turned somersaults over it, and idle young men perched there to

chat and smoke, when doing nothing worse. And such visitors did not add to the cleanliness of the premises. Tobacco juice, peanut shells, pop-corn papers, and the like were scattered there daily, and left to accumulate before most of the doors. Every evening one walk was swept and garnished by the plump little hands of Kitty McCosh, who said, every time she assailed it with a broom and water, "If I must be poor, I will be clean."

Kitty's father and mother had lived up-stairs in this house till the death of the latter. When the humble funeral was over, and Willie returned with his little girl to the lonesome room, he sat down to review the past and to face the future. He remembered his early teachings in the village kirk among the Scottish hills, and at his mother's knee in the poor, turf-covered cottage; he thought of all his wanderings from God since then, and of the sorrow he had brought on her who had left a happy home and alienated herself from her family to follow him over the sea.

Taking Kitty by the hand he went down-stairs and into the room of "a lone body

named Mistress Hunter," who had been his wife's kindest neighbor.

"Here, neebor," he said, "is Kitty for ye; the best and dearest thing I ha' in the world. It 's na fit that she live wi' me and see the company that may gather round me now Bessie 's gone. Keep her and I 'll do right in the futur', and pay yer rent every Saturday night."

This was not a princely offer; but Susan Hunter was a lonely woman; so she accepted the charge gladly.

Willie had now forgotten his vows to "do right in the futur', but he had always paid Mrs. Hunter's rent, and taken tea with the child on Sunday.

Kitty had come up with the neat ways of her protector, and was now a light-hearted, buxom little girl, the nurse of all the neglected babies, and the patron of the older children in the alley. Even the big boys used to come to her to settle their disputed right, to complain when they were called hard names, or got a blow or a kick from an unruly playmate.

She usually opened court on these occasions by saying to the complainant, "Go wash your

face and hands, and then I 'll talk to you;" and they always obeyed her, even when they had to borrow soap and towel from her.

It had never entered Kitty's head that she was an unfortunate child, when at the age of thirteen she began to earn her own clothes, by sewing porcelain buttons on to cards, as sold in the stores. She formed a score of bright plans for spending her first "lovely new dollar bill," but she cheerfully yielded them up when Mrs. Hunter reminded her that she would soon need a warm cloak and stout shoes.

Kitty had begun to attend Mother West's meetings; and one night "Black Tommy," in trying to describe the chorus of heaven, had made this remark: "Anybody dat goes up from Guptil Alley to de Fader's house on high won't know deirsel's, it 'll be so clean up dar! No mud, no rubbish, no litter, no bad smells; it will allus be swep' clean and dusted; and de shinin' gates and de golden streets will be kep' polished all de time! And only dem dat love holy and clean t'ings will be let in! So if you wants to be happy where you got to keep fixed up, you best begin right smart here,

before, to be tidy-like, same's you see here, and in Missey Hunter's room; my place is too poor to talk 'bout, but I keeps it right smart to de eye of the Massa who visits me all times."

"I'm going to clean up this alley and keep it clean!" cried Kitty, as she and Mrs. Hunter walked up to their own door.

"It's no use, child; for the boys would throw old vegetables and sticks about on purpose to tease you," replied the good woman.

"Well, I mean to try at any rate," said Kitty, "for if God and the good folks in heaven look down in here it must seem awful to them!"

The next evening, just after sunset, she rolled up her pink "pocket-apron," heavy with buttons, and set off for a walk. It was well she did not tell Mrs. Hunter her plans, or they would never have been carried out.

Kitty, dressed in her best, with her cheeks like roses, ran up the high steps of the house where the landlord lived, rang the bell, and asked to see him. Concluding she was some lady's errand girl, the servant showed her into

the library where the gentleman was sitting, reading his evening paper.

"Well, child?" he said, when he saw her before him.

"I 'm Kitty McCosh, sir;" said the little girl, with a courtesy.

"I 'm glad to hear it," replied the rich man, smiling at her innocence. "Now tell me who Kitty McCosh is, and what she wants here."

"I 'm Willie McCosh's child, that lives with Mrs. Hunter, 18 Guptil Alley. You own the houses there, sir."

"Oh, do I? Well, I 'm glad to hear that, too; for sometimes I 've doubted it, I get so little rent there. Well, Kitty, what is it?"

"I want to be clean, sir!" she exclaimed.

"You are, my child, as clean as a lily!"

"Well, sir, but I want everybody else to be clean, too!"

"Then you 're in a sad place, Kitty, for there are very few in Guptil Alley who care to be neat. I 'm ashamed to own the place," said the landlord.

"But you 've surely seen one neat place, sir, at the end o' the alley?" said Kitty.

"Yes; and I've thought of giving a premium to the tenant that sets such a good example there."

"That's me, please sir!" cried Kitty, with glowing cheeks. "I get up every morning early, and sweep and wash our bit o' walk; and afore night I sweep it again. And I watch, and scold the boys; and one way and another I keep it clean."

"And what do you want of me, child?"

"I want you to help me keep the alley clean, sir."

"Me? what can I do, child?"

"You can bid them all be neat, and tell them they shan't stay there if they're not."

"I've told them that a hundred times, and they only grow worse."

"Not all o' them, sir. Think o' lonely Mother West, and Mammy Hunter, and black Tom — no, 'Beautiful Tommy' they call him now. They keep neat inside, sir. Mother West gave me a new broom and pail to wash my walk, and told me God would love me if I tried to make the place tidy. And He'll love you if you help me!"

"Well, Kitty, I 'll do that; I 'll make you my little policeman to enforce my orders. I'll give you five dollars now, and you may hire the boys to help you, or you may punish them in some way for hindering your work."

"Five dollars, sir! Why, I 'm afraid to go through the street with that, lest I be robbed!" cried Kitty.

"What will you do first, my child?"

"First, sir? Oh, I 'll pray first that God would help me. Then I 'll go to work, and I know the big boys will help me."

"Well, go then, child; and come back in a week and tell me how you succeed. Good-by."

With her five dollar bill grasped in her hand, she rushed through the streets as if all the highwaymen in the city were at her heels.

It was a moonlight night, and the alley boys were entertaining themselves by playing and hiding behind ash-barrels and tip-carts.

"Come, boys, run for your sisters, and bring all the brooms, and shovels, and pails you can find. I 'm going to clean the alley, and keep it clean; and I want your help. When it 's done I 'll have a 'party' in my room; and if we can

keep it clean, I 'll have a party every month. Every one that helps, and that don't spit or throw nutshells, and old cabbage-leaves, and fish-bones about, and will dress up clean, shall come to it."

It was a sight to bless the eyes of philanthropists, when Kitty had marshaled her force and got them into working order. She armed herself with a hoe and attacked the scattered rubbish, drawing it into a heap for Tom Bolt to shovel into his wheelbarrow; while other boys shoveled and hoed, and the girls swept in all directions, laughing and whistling. Men and women looked from doors and windows in amazement at "children wearying themselves at such useless work," and called out, "Who bid you do that, simple things?"

"Kitty McCosh is tryin' to make our 'alley look like heaven above,'" cried a boy; "and we are helpin' her so to get a party, with nuts and apples."

Here Beautiful Tommy appeared on the scene of action with his shovel and wheelbarrow; then several men came out, offering to help also.

By nine o'clock, although Guptil Alley fell far short of our ideas of heavenly purity, it looked like a new place. The ash-man had ten times his usual load from there next day; and the women all set to work, washing their doors and windows. The landlord heard the news and called on Kitty; he praised the neatness of the place and promised a monthly "party" to the children as long as they would keep it in order.

Kitty thanked God that night for what He had helped her to do; and the next day she told "Beautiful Tommy" that all this came from the sermon he preached about heaven, at Mother West's meeting. And Kitty was happier than many a petted child who knows not how to pass the weary hours.

IV.

MARY LINCOLN.

"ARE you perfectly sure there 's a heaven, mother?" asked a sick young girl, with the hot roses burning on her cheeks.

"Of course, my darling," replied the lady. "If not, where would people go when they die? And then the Bible, which is all true, tell us so."

"I never saw it in the Bible, mother. It is not in the ten commandments, I know," replied the young girl.

"Perhaps not, my love," answered this cultivated heathen; "but it is somewhere in the Book."

"And will everybody in the world go there after death?"

"Low and wicked people, who kill and steal, *ought* not to go to such a beautiful place; but all respectable and good folk will; why should they not?"

"Do you think I can get in there, mother?"

"You, my darling? Of course you can! What have you ever done that would shut you out of heaven?"

"What have I ever done that would help me to get in there? I have never done any good, and I don't know God. I've never prayed to Him, nor loved Him."

"Why, Mary, how you do talk, my dear! You have never done anything *but* good. Only think what a comfort you have been to papa and me! You do know God, darling, — that He is the wisest and kindest being in all the world; and as to praying to Him, you have always said, 'Now I lay me down to sleep,' ever since you could speak. And you cannot have forgotten that papa has always read a prayer at breakfast every New Year's morning, so as to begin the year aright; and that we had a minister on purpose to pray when grandma and the dear little boys died."

"And yet, mother, God is a stranger to me. I do not love Him, and yet my heart aches for Him."

"Yes, you do love Him, dear. You are nerv-

ous; you must take a powder and go to sleep now."

"Oh no, not now, mother dear; this is Monday night, is n't it?"

"Yes, love, why?"

"Because, mother, there 's something very strange happens on Monday evenings now. Just as I get settled for the night I hear singing. It sounds very far off, and yet I hear the words as plainly as if the singers were in my room. You know I hear sounds that are too far off for other ears."

"No doubt it comes from the Methodist church round the corner. It is a shame for those people to sing so loud as to disturb the sick! I wonder if they think such screaming will get them into heaven easier than remaining peaceably at home will do."

"They never trouble me, mother. I love to hear them sing. But they have no meeting, nursie says, on Monday evening; so she thinks I dream of the singing. Last Monday night I know I heard these words: 'The old, old story of Jesus and His love.' I do wish, mother, I knew more about His love. When I am so

tired, I often long to see Him, as if that would rest me. Don't you remember how our old Katie used to sing about Jesus, to rest herself when she was tired?"

"Yes, poor, ignorant old creature. She had no other way of amusing herself."

"Mother, will you find out who these singers are? I want to see them so much. I think they could teach me how to rest, and tell me how to love God."

"Yes, my dear, I will try, and if they are respectable people, we will ask them to come here and sing for you."

Guptil Alley was not in the low part of that city, but was a blot on a fine section where nearly all the buildings were new. From the high windows of Mother West's room one could look into the vine-clad yards of the "square," on which this young girl lived, and when the noises of the city were hushed, voices could be heard from them. It was from those flower-screened windows that "the old, old story" had been wafted into that chamber of luxury and to the ear of the sick girl, awakening in her heart a desire for the joy it described.

On this Monday evening the parents and the nurse were seated, at her request, by the open window, listening for the "beautiful words," which were clearly uttered: —

> "Ye, who, tossed on beds of pain,
> Seek for ease but seek in vain,
> . . . . . .
> Hither come, for here is found
> Balm that flows for every wound,
> Peace that ever shall endure,
> Rest eternal, sacred, sure."

"What can that 'rest' be? Father, go and find them, and bring them here to me."

"Why, my dear, what could I say to strange people living, as I think these do, in a tenement house behind us?" asked the kind father in surprise.

"I want to see them, father. I am tired, and they can tell me how to rest. Go, for my sake, dear father."

That was too great a sacrifice of dignity, but the affectionate father compromised the matter by asking information and aid of the grocer in the next street. "Oh yes," the man replied, "I know where that hymn-singing comes from. There's an old saint in Guptil Alley who

quarters all the miserable creatures she can find, about her, and feeds them, and gets work for them, and converts them into Christians. There 's an old black fellow, that was a pest in the neighborhood, but he 's turned into a new man. He used to dance clog-dances and sing low songs for pennies on the corners and round the market. Now he works like a dog, and keeps himself clean, and goes to Sunday-school and meeting like a Christian. He 's got a splendid voice, and sings with the old lady and some others every Monday night in her room. I always listen to them if I 'm not too busy in the store."

"Go and bring them to my house to sing, and I 'll pay them well. My sick child is so charmed with the words they sing that she will not rest till she sees them."

Christians in health and blessed with plenty little know the effort it cost Mother West, with her infirmities, to array herself in her best black gown and cap, to provide her "Beautiful Tommy" with the little extras which she thought necessary to make him presentable in a gentleman's house, and to train Kitty Mc-

Cosh in manners, before she, leaning on her daughter's arm, met the father and mother of Mary Lincoln in their gorgeously furnished parlor.

If these parents had looked for a band of poor but merry singers who were flattered by this call, and hopeful of gain from it, they must have been greatly surprised at the modest dignity of Mother West and her daughter, and the bashful surprise of the others.

All the party were seated but Tommy ; he was left to crouch behind the door, as if he had been their watch-dog.

After the mother had told of the wonderful goodness of her child, and of the strange nervousness which had now taken possession of her about heaven, she led them up-stairs, ignoring the presence of Tommy, as she passed him in the hall.

"Come, Tommy," said Mother West, "we cannot sing without you, and we want the help of your faith while we pray for this dear child."

Tommy followed with much hesitation till he reached the door of the sick-room. There he seated himself on the stairs, and whispered to

his patron, "It might skeer her to see such a poor-lookin' cretur as me, so I'll set here and sing."

Mother West sat down by the bed, and holding the hand of the sick girl, asked: "What can I do for you, my dear child?"

"You can tell me how to find rest, and how to go to heaven. I want to hear that 'old, old story' you sing about, and I want to know God." And they sang to her of

> "Jesus and his glory,
> Of Jesus and his love."

And when their song ceased, the sufferer said, "Oh, how happy for you! But I am so ignorant that it will take me a long time to learn that story."

"No, my dear child, you can learn it now, it is so short and simple. It is this: you need Jesus for your friend and Saviour, and He is here at your bedside, ready to receive you if you will only come to Him."

"But He seems very far off, and the way to Him is dark and rough, and I cannot get there, I am so weak."

"If Christ should come into the room now

as He used to enter sick-rooms when He was on earth, what would you do?" asked Mother West.

"Oh, if He only would! I would throw my arms around Him, and never, never leave Him again."

"Well, my dear child, He is here beside you, just as surely as if your poor, tired eyes could see Him. Now lay your hand in His and just tell Him all you would if you could see Him. He says still: 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Those are His words, and if you are weary and want rest, it is ready for you."

"But I must do something to please God before He will let me come to Him," said the sick girl.

"No, nothing but believe on Him and accept His offer of mercy and peace. He Himself said, when He gave up His life, 'It is finished.' So He left nothing for us poor sinners to do in the way of salvation, but to accept it as a free gift. If you should live an hundred years and work faithfully for Christ, you would still have to accept His salvation as a gift."

"Oh, is that all? Well, I am not too weak and tired to take a gift, but if I had anything to do first I should die without finding rest," said the young girl, closing her eyes and turning her head wearily away.

The visitors sang again, in a low tone, "Just as I am, without one plea," and then, without a parting word, slipped silently out of the room, so as not to break the gentle sleep into which Mary had fallen.

Those parents, though living in the full light of the gospel, had never before heard of its pure simplicity. They were touched by the tenderness and zeal of their humble visitor; and asked, before they parted with her, for a visit from the clergyman who had taught her all this.

The minister came the next day, but it was too late for him to point the young girl to Christ. She had found Him, already, the joy and the rest of her soul, and gladly did she acknowledge the gift through that humble messenger.

Each servant of God has his own appointed work, which cannot be taken from him by

another, and the glory of leading this sweet child into rest and joy belonged to Mother West, and not to her learned pastor.

The humble woman became a welcome guest at this home of wealth, and her visits were like those of an angel in the sick-room. Even Tommy was welcomed when he went to sing, but nothing could ever induce him to go nearer than the "top-steer, lest he might skeer de sick lady."

All in that house are now asking about this strange "story," which is as new to them as if they had been born in a heathen land.

They are softened towards the gospel, and almost willing to yield to its claims if presented by a man of learning and popularity. But God will send by whom He will send, and He may humble their pride by sending His light through one of His lowly servants in Guptil Alley.

V.

MARGARET BELL.

MOTHER WEST, her daughter, and Kitty McCosh had visited Mary Lincoln, and sung for her more than once, and had been tolerated rather than welcomed by her mother. The news had spread among the friends of the Lincolns, that "an old minister in the neighborhood, hearing of the sickness and unhappiness of that lovely child, had sent half a dozen fanatical beggars to the house, to scare her into a belief of his own hard doctrines;" and some of them felt bound to fly to her succor.

Among these deliverers from imaginary evil was Margaret Bell, a bright and lovely woman (most people called her a girl), who was the charm of the circle in which she moved. She was the devout friend and companion of Mrs. Lincoln, although in every respect her superior.

Margaret's complexion was as pure as a lily, and time had left untouched the roses on her cheeks, and the brown hue of her hair. Her spirit was as light as a child's, and she made sunshine wherever she went. She was thirty-eight years old, yet nobody regarded her as "a maiden lady." She had remained unmarried, simply because she had never seen any one she loved well enough to marry. She shared and rejoiced in all the joys of her married friends, as if it were her own happiness. They named their babies for her, and all longed to have their daughters just like her, — earnest, active, and unselfish, the patron of the poor, and the admired friend of all. Margaret Bell was a strong woman and relied greatly on her own judgment, and knew her power of exercising it over others. She rarely argued a point, but, in the gentlest, sweetest way, stated her position, and drew others to it by her own confidence in it as the right one.

Mary Lincoln was one of Margaret's pets; and when the latter returned from a distant city and found her ill, and heard the exaggerated story of her having been "frightened into

religion," she took the matter into her own strong hands. She one night volunteered to watch with her, after having given her views of "those horrid doctrines," in a way that startled the indulgent mother.

"And so you've been ill, darling, and I not here to nurse and comfort you;" she said, laying her cool, soft cheek beside the burning one of poor Mary.

"Yes, but I'm better now, and can sleep so sweetly. I am peaceful, even when I am in pain. Oh, rest is so lovely, Miss Margaret," said the sick girl.

"I'm delighted to hear you say that. I know my darling Molly had too much good sense to be scared out of her dear little wits by half a dozen old tramps, that naughty mamma, in her false love, let in to worry you. I have given mamma a good scolding, and left one for papa, when he wakes up in the morning; and after this I am going to be a watch at your door. No old grannies, and tramps, and dwarfs shall come in here again to tell my sweet Molly that she's a sinner, — the ridiculous thought!"

"But, Miss Margaret dear, I am a great sinner, and I knew it before these poor folks told me so. I wanted everything and I had nothing. I was tired all the time, and could n't rest, and, and, — but oh, I can't tell it all, it 's so long! I shall never, never be able to tell half of it here."

"And you came to your senses, and saw that you were safe, and had a right to rest in God, did n't you, my dear?"

"No, not so, Miss Margaret. I saw I was all wrong, and had no right to anything from God."

"Who had, if you had n't?"

"Nobody. But God has prepared a rest for me in Christ, who has taken away all my sins. I have found it through Mother West. I don't think I shall let you call my friends 'grannies, and tramps, and dwarfs,' Miss Margaret. I do wish you could hear them sing. I never heard such music before," said Mary smiling.

Miss Margaret laughed, patted the hot cheek, and said, "Poor sick darling, you 're turned back to babyhood again ; I used to sing to you, —

'Trot, trot to Boston,
To buy a little pig,'

'Dickery, dickery, dock,
The mouse ran up the clock,'

and you thought that mine was the sweetest music in the world. You 'll get over this hallucination when you are once well again, dear."

"Get over *what?*"

"Why, these queer notions; that you are a sinner, that you must be under obligations to somehody else, to get you safe into heaven."

"I hope God will take me to Himself first. I should tremble at the thought of rising from this bed and going out, without Christ to guide me, and comfort and save me; oh, He is so dear to me!"

Miss Margaret looked at the pale girl, and sighed, and then said, "Look at me, dear; did you ever see a happier woman than I?"

"You are very cheerful when I see you; but don't you sometimes fear death, and wish you had some one to go into the grave with you?" asked Mary.

Miss Margaret was silent a moment, for she was truthful in all matters; but soon she replied, "No one loves death, the destroyer of this body, my dear; but we must all die, and so brave people make up their minds to meet death like heroes and heroines; I hope for the best beyond the grave."

"In what do you hope, Miss Margaret?"

"I hope in God, dear. He has made me, and placed me here to honor and to please Him, and I have tried my very best to do so; and therefore I know He will accept me. I follow Christ's example."

"Have you always done just as Christ did here?"

"Well, I always try to follow Him. I give my money to the poor, I nurse the sick, and I teach little street Arabs, — when I can catch them, and hold on to them long enough. I 'm a pretty good sort of a lady, Molly; and I think I have done enough in this world to carry me safely into the next. Don't you?"

"I can't read your heart, Miss Margaret. I thought I was very good, till I saw my heart; and I thought I needed no one but

papa and mamma to lean on, till I saw they could n't help me. I found I was a poor, sinful child, who had never had one good thought and never done anything for Christ. Every pleasant word or kind act had been to please some one else; and God was n't in all my thoughts. I was just as proud of my goodness, and as selfish, as I could be! But that 'old, old story of Jesus and His love,' — oh, I wish you could hear those poor people sing it!"

"Thankee, ma'am, I'd rather go to the opera for my music!" replied Miss Margaret playfully. "I'd rather work myself into heaven, than to go creeping in on somebody else's merits. I choose to 'paddle my own canoe.'"

Mary did not smile, but she replied, "If you could only hear them tell of Jesus, I know you would love them, as well as Him."

"No, dear, not in the sense of admiration. I pity such folks, and I will help you to clothe and feed them, by and by; but I won't love them."

"I almost envy them; Christ lives with

them, and walks with them, and talks to them every day; and they forget their shabby clothes, and their poor homes, and feel like kings and queens, because He has mansions and thrones all prepared for them, without any labor or price from them."

"Yes, there's the trouble with such folks; they are mean-spirited; they are willing to accept so much aid and help from others! I want to merit heaven, and get it as the reward of my labor. But I shall not argue any more with you, my darling. These whims will vanish with the effects of the morphine; and before long, you and I will be running up and down Guptil Alley, carrying flannel and shoes and cookies to Granny West, and the professors in her divinity school!"

"Will you go to Mother West's for me to-morrow?" asked Mary.

"What? to get myself corrected by Professor Tommy, and to take lessons in piety of the little button girl?" cried Miss Margaret in playful surprise.

"No, but to do her a kindness."

"Indeed I will, and glad of the chance.

'Do and live,' is my motto. I would crawl on my knees (I guess I would) to Guptil Alley to serve anybody; but I won't put myself under tutelage to such folks. Now good-night, darling."

The weak, trusting child turned her face to the wall in search of sleep; and the strong self-righteous woman buried herself in a great easy-chair, to reflect on the strange things she had heard for the first time, from the lips of one whose words she believed.

. . . . . .

Silence which was only broken by the clanging of the great bells, as they rung out the small hours, now fell on the city. The watcher had no struggle with sleep, for new thoughts were busy in her brain, and the great questions of life, death, and eternity were sounding in her ears. "Can it be," she asked herself, "that God has hidden anything from me that He has revealed to these poor, ignorant creatures? May it not be possible after all that I, who know so much, and who have done so much, may have overlooked some of the great truths of the Bible? How

is it that this weak and timid child has risen above death, trampled it under her feet; and that I who am so brave, so self-reliant, tremble at the toll of a funeral bell and shrink from the sight of an open grave?"

And at these thoughts her heart turned sick. She strove to drive them away by repeating snatches of sacred poetry, and passages from the Scripture; but in vain. Death had a sting for her, and the grave a victory over her spirit; and she felt it as never before. Her high spirits, her carnal nature, and her unceasing activity had generally kept these things at bay. But now her soul was troubled; and she felt that philosophy was powerless to give her the simple trust of this sick young girl. Her faith had failed her, and she was afloat on a sea of doubt.

It seemed as if the morning would never dawn, and drive away the shadows from her soul. Her beautiful fabric of purity and goodness had vanished, and she felt herself without one claim to heaven.

She set forth soon after breakfast, as Mary's

messenger to Guptil Alley. There by the high, flower-screened window, she heard, as if for the first time, —

"The old, old story
Of Jesus and His love,"

and her proud nature was so humbled that she asked for guidance in the way of life. She told of her pride which had refused to accept a free salvation; and of her self-righteousness which had blinded her to the need of a Saviour. She spoke with tears of her cruel effort the night before to shake the trust of a dying child. She was not there as a patron, but as a beggar for life and peace.

Mother West's theology had few points, and these she stated in plain terms thus: —

"We are all sinners, estranged from God and holiness.

"God has sent Jesus Christ to deliver us from our sins, by bearing them in His own body on the tree.

"We, who willfully remain in rebellion against God, will be denied His presence and the joys of heaven.

"A full and free salvation, and glory, beyond our power to conceive, will be the eternal

portion of those who accept Jesus Christ, and become one with Him, in spirit and in labor."

Margaret Bell would not promise to believe, but she did promise to read God's Word, and to ask for light from on high; and she begged permission to repeat her visit to this humble room, so like heaven it seemed.

On leaving, she quietly slipped a small gold piece into Mother West's hand. The old lady looked at it in surprise, and returning it said, —

"No, my dear lady, I do not need this. My bread is given and my water is sure, and I have few other wants. Use this for the poor. I thank you for your visit and hope to see you soon again. Farewell."

The calm self-possession and quiet dignity of this humble woman rebuked the pride of Margaret as nothing else could have done; and she went to her home, feeling herself less than the least of God's creatures; hungry without bread, and thirsty without water. She had not been allowed even to buy the interest and the prayers of the noble woman she had tauntingly classed among tramps and beggars.

VI.

COUSIN GERALD.

MARY LINCOLN was slowly coming back from the gates of death, beside which she had seemed for months to be standing, and reaching out again for the flowers of earth that were blooming around her. The world seemed as if newly created for her joy, and she felt that every one she knew must sympathize in her gladness.

What then was her disappointment when her cousin, who, since the close of the war, and the loss of his father's property, had been as a brother, returned home on his college vacation with a heart so opposed to all he had heard, as scarcely to rejoice in her recovery.

Cousin Gerald was one of those kind, genial, merry fellows whom everybody loves; but he was now at that disagreeable age when he felt that he was the wisest man in the world, that his college was the only one in the country,

and that his family and friends made up all that was worth calling "society." To this boyish conceit he added the most ludicrous dignity, which made him seem not a little imperious when laying down his views of what was right and proper.

Unfortunately for him the Lincolns had shared in his high opinion of himself, and really, almost without knowing it, had regarded him as an authority on many points.

He had now returned half a head taller, a great deal handsomer, and nobody can tell how much wiser, than when he left home nine months before. He had closed his Sophomore (wise fool) year, and felt himself a Solomon in a silly world.

His pride had been touched by the accounts his aunt had given him from time to time of Mary's instructors, and the effect of their lessons; and he had now come home to annihilate them, with a breath, and to wake his pretty cousin up to the charms of the life she was soon to enter.

Sarcasm and jesting were Gerald's keenest weapons, and with these he opened fire on the

family before he had been an hour in the house.

"Well, Molly, let 's hear the history of the Beggars' Crusade," he cried, laughing. "Will Dayton got it all from his sisters, and such a story as he made out I never heard before. Come tell me as your father confessor what these lunatics did and said when you were delirious with fever, and your mother crazy to please you."

"Nothing, Gerald, but what was wise and kind. I was in great trouble, and they, having the comfort I needed, brought it to me," replied Mary.

"Well, do join a respectable church, if you join any, and don't be led about by the nose by the low and vulgar, child."

"I don't know any low or vulgar people, Gerald."

"Will Dayton says there 's an old black dwarf — a sort of fortune-teller, and an old witch of a woman, and a set like them, who have had the run of the house, and been supported by your parents for months, because you, in your weakness, liked to hear their old-fashioned songs or psalms."

Mary looked pained, but simply replied, "You do not know these people, Gerald, or you would not dare to speak of them so."

"Dare?" cried the independent young gentleman; "you don't suppose I am afraid of them, do you?"

"No, but I hope you have a fear of God that will prevent you from scorning those He loves," said Mary.

"Well, puss, that is rich!" cried the wise, wise man.

"Gerald," said Mrs. Lincoln, "you honor your mother's memory, and her judgment, and you remember her feelings the last year of her life, when none of us understood her."

"Certainly, auntie, that 's just what I am thinking of. When she was sick and nervous the blacks took possession of her — bodily and spiritually — and made an enthusiast of her."

"What was she before, Gerald?" asked Mary.

"Well, we called ourselves as good as anybody, and went to church every Sunday morning, and always brought the minister home to

dinner. When the 'good days' came round, we trimmed up and read our lessons like other folks, and there was no reason for poor mamma feeling as she did, that she had wasted life, and misled her boys, and so on, and so forth."

"Are you sorry she died as she did, Gerald?" asked his aunt.

"I am glad she was happy — dear mother" — he added with a sigh, but recovering himself, he said, "I think there ought to be fair play in religion as well as everywhere else."

"Why, what do you mean, Gerald?"

"Well, you know very well what good terms we were on with our clergyman then, father almost supported him and the little church too; and he used the horses when he pleased, and brought his friends to the house, and felt as if he was, as they say of ministers who wait on men about to be hung, 'our spiritual adviser.' And yet when dear mamma got weak and nervous, she never sent for him, but turned to old Molly and Parson Jumbo — you remember them — and pinned her faith to their sleeves, and died happy. That 's like sending for a surgeon when you prick your finger, and call-

ing for an old granny when your arm is to be amputated. I knew very well that our clergyman felt it, for at the funeral all he could say was, 'Her attendants tell us, so and so.'"

"Did auntie refuse to see her minister in her sickness?" asked Mary.

"Oh no, he went into her room many times, and often read a prayer or a bit of poetry to her, but he never seemed to know what to say to her."

"Ah, Gerald, I fear he had not experienced what she had. He should have studied theology with Parson Jumbo, perhaps," said Mrs. Lincoln, smiling.

"He could find men less wise in professors' chairs," replied Gerald. He was a shrewd old fellow, and a truly good one, too. He used to pray as if he was inspired — like one of 'de old Probbits,' as he called them."

"I 've no doubt I should take him right into my circle, if he were here," said Mary, smiling.

"No doubt you would, and be more honored than by countenancing these designing old frauds."

"Do you know Mother West, Gerald?"

"No, my dear, nor do I want to," replied the young man.

"That 's not manly, to condemn people on hearsay. You should hear her talk and sing!" exclaimed Mary.

This was too much, and Gerald broke out into a roar of laughter.

"Do you really think she could teach me, Molly?"

"Yes, Gerald, I do."

"I 'd like to see her try it! I 'll go there and hear her gabble as soon as I 'm rested. I like characters, and know I 'll find sport there. Where does she live?"

"I shall not tell you if you are going to make sport of her, because she 's old and poor."

"I 'm a gentleman, Molly; I should never let her know what was in my mind."

"Well, go there with a message from me, as mamma's dear friend did," said Mary.

"I 'm afraid to go; there seems to be a magic about the old lady. She throws out her net, and catches old and young, rich and poor, ignorant and learned; and who can tell but

you might see me wriggling among her victims."

"You are afraid of a poor old saint, then?" said Mrs. Lincoln.

"Indeed, I am not; give me a pail of hot soup, and let me go at once on my errand of mercy. If I go as a patron, she will not feel at liberty to catechise or advise me."

"Take her that bouquet, Gerald, and give her my love," said Mary.

"Better send her a loaf of bread and lump of cheese. That's just like sentimental schoolgirls. I know a girl who worked a *mouchoir* case for another one who looked as though she had n't a *mouchoir* to put in it."

"I don't agree with you, Gerald. Mother West and many others whom we call 'poor people,' have enough to eat and to wear, but they can never buy a book, a little picture, or a flower; and are more grateful for them than for 'bread and cheese.' I gave Kitty McCosh a bouquet on her birthday, and when it was withered she hung it up to dry, and says she shall 'keep it all her life for the love o' me.'"

"She worships it — the silly thing — because

a lady condescended to give it to her. I 'll quiz her, too."

"You had better take care how you do it, for she 's as sharp as you are, to say the least of it. She manages that 'court,' parents and children, and she 's begun on the landlord now;" said Mrs. Lincoln. "I expect we shall have that nuisance removed, or turned into a blessing. Your uncle says that Mother West and Kitty McCosh would raise the value of real estate of that class, wherever they went. It would amuse you to see Kitty marshaling a troop of boys and girls on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, and cleaning up the alley. She takes the hoe and rake and broom, and leads off, and they all follow her. And when the work 's over she seats the boys on the rail before her window, and the girls on the steps of the houses, and makes them presents, and gives them lessons."

"Do you think she 'd give me one?"

"Yes, if you handled the hoe in a way to suit her," replied Mrs. Lincoln. "You may laugh at Kitty McCosh, but if she does n't make her way in life I shall be surprised. She

ought to have more advantages of school than she has yet had."

"I 'll look into her case when I go there, and perhaps I may become her patron," said Gerald, with an air of mock benevolence.

The next day, however, his curiosity to see this strange "magical matron" rose to a fever heat, and he visited her, as he said, with oblations of flowers and currant jelly.

He had promised to meet a classmate in half an hour. But the young man waited an hour at Mrs. Lincoln's, and then went away and returned in another hour, and still Gerald was not there.

When he did come, he was in a very quiet mood, and said little about his visit at first.

"How did Mother West strike you, Gerald?" asked Mary.

"With surprise. I thought she would fall down and worship me for your sake, if not for the honor of the visit. She was very cordial and pleasant; but I felt the moment I met her eye as if she were a duchess, and I a grocer's boy come to serve her."

"How much fun did you get there?" asked his aunt.

"None; she disarmed me at the first."

"How?"

"When I told her I was Mrs. Lincoln's nephew, she smiled, and asked me at once if I had a mother. And before I knew it myself, I had got into the story of her life and death, and — well, you know, auntie, how the thought of mamma always softens me, and drives away my nonsense. I do really think Mrs. West is a wonderful woman. One could not patronize her."

"You did not feel disposed to offer her a loaf of bread and a lump of cheese," said Mary.

"Don't allude to that again. I had not seen her when I indulged in such nonsense. Why does not uncle try to find her a better home?"

"She has reasons for living there, and perhaps she is doing more good than she could do anywhere else," replied Mrs. Lincoln.

"I should like to do something for her, she talks so much as mother used to at the last. I felt almost as if I had found a grandmother, she expressed such an interest in me. How fond she is of flowers. I've promised to go

back to-morrow to see a lily that will be in bloom. How strange that a person who earns her bread can have any heart for such things as flowers!"

"She has a heart for everything that is lovely; and that is why she takes an interest in you and Mary," said Mrs. Lincoln, smiling.

Mrs. West's influence, which she never counteracted by rudely assailing people's private feelings, or even their foolish prejudices, was now to spread beyond Guptil Alley, and beyond her respectable neighbors, and to be felt among young men preparing for the battle of life.

She had thrown a jewel into the sea, when she moved to her high room in that poor alley; and now the circles it had caused were widening day by day, never to be lost till they should touch the silver sands on the other shore.

VII.

MR. JESSOP.

MR. JESSOP knew everything. He knew the Bible was got up by men who were paid for it. He knew the world made itself and was kept going by the fire and steam inside of it. He knew the stars were sparks, and nothing more, for he had often seen them go out. Some folks said the sun stood still, but he knew better, and "guessed he had eyes in his head." He'd seen it rise in the east and set in the west ever since he was born. So he knew astronomy was a humbug!

He knew that when men died they went to dust, and that was the last of them, and the reason ministers preached about souls was so as to scare folks and get their living out of them.

He knew that Newton invented lightning-rods wrong, or else he'd have done it so as not to let lightning strike at all.

He knew the world was moving backwards, that folks did n't know half as much as they did fifty years ago, and he knew everything was going wrong in the government, and had been a long time.

Everything Mr. Jessop owned was just right and could n't be improved — from his patient wife and rude sons — whom he was always blaming at home — to his old house with its untidy grocery, his steeple-crowned hat, pointed boots, and swallow-tail-coat!

Mr. Jessop was a prophet. He knew everything before it happened, and could always say, "I told you so."

Once, however, he had to say, "I could n't have believed it!" and that was when he found the liquor law was being enforced on "respectable folks." He "knew what was right," and he knew it was an outrage to tell a man what he may and what he may not buy or sell or drink! He knew that "nobody's rights were thought worth looking after now but black folks', but he, for one, meant to let them know that he was 'free and equal' if he was white! He hated negroes so that he would n't do anything for them but sell them liquor!"

Mr. Jessop had been a sort of connecting link between the high and low who lived in such unfortunate proximity in that neighborhood. He knew everybody, and could always help a gentleman to a laborer, or a laborer to an employer; and if every scandal between maid and mistress was not discussed over his counter, he regarded himself defrauded of his rights!

There was a very narrow, dark, and dirty passage-way which led from Guptil Alley into Mr. Jessop's yard, a board having, as he said, been villainously broken out of his fence for the purpose. He, however, never inquired for the "villain" who did it, nor yet did he close up the gap.

But now that he had been fined twice and fancied he saw a policeman's eyes at every dingy pane of his store windows, he had risen in his might and resolved he 'd "do something."

There was a wreck of a lawyer, named—as if in irony—Joy, who spent his evenings behind Jessop's desk making charges and bills; and whom Jessop called "My lawyer." He could

not live without "spirit," and he could not buy it, so he was bound by Jessop with a chain as hard as any that ever bound the most wretched slave. He was naturally a gentle, kind-hearted man; but Jessop could now have made him forge or rob, or do anything else, such was his power over him.

This poor man scarcely ever crept out of his own narrow street, suffering from a consciousness of being ridiculously attired. Sometimes he had on an old coat of Jessop's, too bad for the store; and sometimes one of Mrs. Jessop's stately minister's, which she had begged for him. He was sure to get on Bill Jessop's flashy pants with the clerical coat, or the minister's close-breasted vest with some cast off shooting-jacket. Things never came in a way to match; and the sensitive creature knowing this, was always dodging people and slipping behind walls or into alleys to avoid the respectable who were once his friends. Poor Joy! His was a beautiful soul, as God made it, but it was now marred by the hand of the spoiler, and imprisoned in a ruined body. He knew it all, he wept over it, but he "could not

help it, he was too far gone." He was no longer his own keeper!

Mr. Jessop had now been goaded to madness by "the tyranny of the law," and had resolved to stand up for his rights, though it should cost blood — not his own, but that of his dupes — to gain them. Armed with a petition, which poor Joy had drawn up, and dressed in his best clothes, he began to call on his neighbors to "get signers."

The paper set forth the fact that the property holders in the west part of Ward —— were annoyed, and their real estate damaged by the nuisance known as "Guptil Alley," a resort of thieves, drunkards, and blacks! It appealed to the authorities to "clean out the place!" and it threatened some terrible vengeance if it were not done, showing the spite of Jessop and the mildness of poor Joy.

Armed with this he called, one evening, on Mr. Lincoln, and set forth the danger of the neighborhood from fire, pestilence, and robbery, from such pests of society as these who "burrowed there." He proposed having the people driven out, the place renovated, and

turned to business purposes. He even suggested buying some of the "filthy dens" if he could get them cheap enough not to ruin his family in the attempt to aid the neighbors!

"Have you suffered from these people?" asked the gentleman.

"Suffered? indeed I have! my estate is so run down by them that I'm on the verge of beggary."

"You speak from what you know of them. I suppose they deal with you?"

"Yes, every soul of them."

"Do they owe you much?"

"No; not one cent. I would n't trust them long enough to turn their backs."

"Then they pay their honest debts, poor as they are?"

"They have to, if they deal with me."

"Did you ever meet an old person named West, who lives there?"

"I reckon so. She had the impudence to come to my store and advise and urge me to change my business! I set out to kick her into the street, but some way when I looked at her eyes I did not dare to touch her! I 'most

thought she was a witch, she wilted me down so! I treated her as if she'd been my mother, and I've been provoked with myself ever since."

"I know that woman," replied Mr. Lincoln. "She often comes here to see my family, and I believe she can help you if anybody can. Go and tell her your grievances, and see what she says. She has a great deal of influence with the owner of the houses."

"I'm ashamed to go," said Jessop.

"You need not be; tell her I sent you."

Jessop, hoping either to get some favor from the owner of the property or to frighten her into selling it low, made his way to Mother West's room.

He had a speech all ready, and expected to astonish her with his deep wisdom. But scarcely had he opened his lips in abuse of her poor neighbors, when she asked, "And what have you done, friend, to improve their morals and their condition?"

"They're no kin of mine, and I'm in no way obligated to help them," replied Jessop, testily.

"You are bound by the law of God to love them as you love yourself, but instead of that you have been working the ruin of some, and crushing the hearts of others among them; and God will call you to account for it."

"I did n't come here to be abused, old woman!" cried Jessop, angrily.

"I don't know what you came for, friend," replied Mother West, kindly; "but I hope God sent you here for a blessing." And then the dear old saint set his ignorance, his meanness, and his sin before him in a way that made him wish that he could get home without saying "good-by" or going down the stairway, — he was in such haste to get out of her sight. He said no more about "low neighbors."

For the first time in his life he felt as if he knew nothing, or, as he expressed it to his wife, "as if he 'd had all the starch taken out of him."

On his way home he squeezed the petition up into a ball and threw it in the gutter; but after passing on a few steps he turned back, took it up and tore it into atoms, — he was so afraid somebody might pick it up and read it.

That was the end of poor Joy's great petition!

When Mr. Lincoln saw Mother West again he asked her if she could do anything for her small-souled neighbor Jessop.

"No," she replied, "I can do nothing for him. This kind goeth not out save by prayer and fasting; a conceited and ignorant soul is harder to win than the vilest one to be found! I have far more hope for poor ruined Joy than for Mr. Jessop."

As she said this a shadow passed over her face, and she added, "Here I am again limiting the Holy One of Israel! Is that poor weak man one to resist God? No. He is but a reed before Him, and I will ask and look for a power that will bring him down to the dust crying for mercy. I will give God no rest till He magnifies His name in the salvation of poor Jessop!"

Many days passed over before they heard from the grocer again. Then he came to the old lady with a gay geranium in a pot, having seen, he said, that she was fond of flowers. He made a short neighborly call, and when he

rose to go, he said, "I was rude and ill-natured when I was here before; and I have n't felt easy about it. My wife thought I ought to come and tell you of it; and — and — my wife wanted me to — to — ask you to pray for me."

"Is it only your wife, my friend, that sees your need of prayer? Do you not feel it yourself?"

"Well — yes — I feel miserable about Joy, and a good many other folks and things; and I don't know what to do!"

"Then I am just the one to tell you. I know where to cast all burdens, for I have had many to weigh me down in life. Go to Jesus and throw all your sins and your sorrows at the foot of His cross. Give yourself to Him and He will take you, and then you 'll know the real joy of life; and by and by you 'll know the peace that death can't destroy."

"Poor Joy, too, he 's in trouble. He 's given up drink, and he 's nearly wild. I advised him last night to take just a little to calm his nerves, but he says he 'll die first. He prayed all night last night, and my wife went into his room to carry him some coffee, and found him

asleep on his knees. He sprung up and asked her if she was an angel come to save him. He has such a powerful respect for women that if any one can help him, they can. Poor Joy, he has n't done anything but drink, — but I — do you think God will put it all to my account ?"

"Yes, unless you repent."

"I do from my soul! And I wish all I owned was burned up !"

"No, all you hold is God's. He will sanctify it to His use."

"I wish I was black Tommy ; he 's the happiest man I know !"

"You can have Tommy's happiness without his deformity or his poverty. There is fullness yet in the fountain from which Tommy drew his joy. Go home now and spend the day with Jesus."

"I 'm afraid to leave you lest all my trouble comes back on me !"

"If you trust in me it surely will ; but not if you look to Jesus."

"But He 'll help me for your sake, not for mine."

"He 'll do it for His own name's sake. If I

can help you I will, and you may stay with me awhile."

"Jessop forgot the store—all but the "bar;" that lay like a live coal on his heart till he was enabled to receive that wondrous truth: The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin—even the deep, dark crime of the rum-seller.

And Jessop became a new man, as also did poor Joy, of whom we shall write again.

VIII.

POOR JOY.

"POOR Joy!" That had been for years his only name. The virtuous and the pitiful uttered it with a sigh, the self-righteous with scorn, the inebriate — with whom he had never been a boon companion — with a scoff at "his larnin' and his gintility," and the rum-seller with a chuckle of delight; for, whoever else might break his fetters, he was sure of "Poor Joy." He knew he had gone beyond the pity of men, and fancied he must therefore be beyond the mercy of God. It seemed as if there was nothing in store for him here but a drunkard's grave, and beyond? Ah! how few think of the unknown "beyond" of those whom they censure or scorn for their ill-doing!

We have now a kind word to say for the drunkard. He is not a fiend incarnate, "a sinner above all the sinners in Christendom."

The victim to the wine-cup may be no blacker in the eye of Heaven than some who walk upright in business circles, fill their seats in church, and have "Esq." written after their names. God may pity the first and despise the last.

Were "the possessions" of which we read in the New Testament the result of a special power granted to evil spirits to distress and destroy men, which, like the miracles of mercy, have passed away? or, were they merely what we see every day, the emissaries of Satan taking captive and sometimes destroying the weak and the helpless? At any rate, there are many just such cases now.

One of these "possessed" was poor Joy. In the earliest flush of manhood he had looked on the wine when it was red, forgetting the serpent that hides itself in every cup. But that was only "a boyish error," and he came out into life with bright prospects. A few years saw him in a flourishing practice for one of his years; but alas, he added to his natural brilliancy by drinking. Still, "he drank only as a gentleman." But the tempter

grew stronger and he grew weaker, till at length those who had led him into evil pointed the finger of scorn at him, and cried, "Joy has ruined himself, — he drinks like a fool." Before he was thirty-two years old his office was shut and he was eating the bread of his widowed mother, who hid him tenderly away from the eyes of the world when it would have been a shame to him to be seen. He despised himself for this meanness, and wept, and promised, after each new humiliation, that "this should be the last;" and she always believed him.

Oh the mystery of mother-love!

> "When o'er it passed a cloud of blame
> Its inner glory beamed the same."

Hearts are often slow in breaking, but anguish such as hers, with hope deferred, does its work in the end. Joy's mother died with her head upon his breast, with full faith in his promise to lead a new life, and to be as a father to his little sister whom he really loved.

But we need not tell the sad story of a cheerless home, and the child whom neighbors often fed and sheltered, till an indignant grandfather removed her to his country home,

and "left Joy to shift for himself." It is the old tale of rising and falling, resolving and breaking resolutions.

There was now no door in all the wide world open to him; no lip to smile at his coming, no eye to weep over his falling. He was alone. He made one more effort to regain his character, and to get business; and in doing so fell into the merciless hands of Jessop. He was to keep his books, and collect his liquor bills; and in return was to have a room in a house he owned, and "all the spirits he wanted!"

Sometimes Joy got a little decent business, and then his sensitive spirit saved itself torture by dropping money into Jessop's yawning till, instead of collecting it from the starving wives of inebriates.

Joy had never yielded to the coarseness with which the demon of strong drink so generally sullies the souls of his victims. The ribald song, the vulgar jest, and the impious oath, were always offensive to his ear; and even when stupid with liquor he would flee from those in the same condition, and

shut himself up in his room, and weep over his broken vows. Sometimes he would call out in the darkness to his mother to break his fetters, and ask why God had scorned her prayers, — he dared not pray himself.

One night he sat alone, and in the darkness, the tempter whispering in his ear the most awful suggestions of which he is capable. "Why drag on a life like this, making still deeper your final condemnation? Your life is your own, why not make an end of it?"

Joy hailed the thought as if it had been a savior.

His hand was on his razor when he heard the wily touch of Jessop on his door, and the words, whispered in the gloom, "Tom Lake's father has been with him all day. He brought loads of good things from the farm. Tom has signed the pledge, and the old man has given him a nice silver watch, and left some money with his wife. He goes in the eight o'clock train, and if you demand payment from Lake, I should n't wonder if his wife makes him give up that watch. I never saw a woman that hated a debt as she does!"

Poor Joy's first impulse was to say that his last deed of that kind was done, and that his day of sin was ended; but before he could command his voice his fear of Jessop returned, and, like a frightened dog in the presence of a cruel master, he dropped his head, drew his slouched hat over his ears, and went out into the storm, followed to the head of Guptil Alley by his master. As Jessop turned to leave him, Joy drew a sigh that ended in a groan.

"Come, come, don't be a fool now, and lose your high reputation for a collector, Joy!" exclaimed Jessop in a cheery voice. Come round if you have good luck, and we'll have a glass of hot punch together. Mrs. J.'s gone to her prayer-meeting to-night, and will be none the wiser. Ha, ha!"

"I would n't deceive that merciful woman for a barrel of punch — the cursed stuff!" Mrs. Jessop knows the worst of me, now, and she always shall! I dreamed last night that I heard her and my mother praying for my soul, and as long as I heard their voices I saw the gate open — as if God could n't shut it while they prayed!" cried Joy.

"Here, Joy! wake up! what are you talking about? You're losing your senses, a'n't you?" shouted Jessop, giving him a smart push.

"I suppose I am," sighed Joy. "It is eighteen years ago to-night — Commencement Day — a freshman, that I first tasted ardent spirits — the curse of my life, that will cost me my soul!"

"Pho, pho!" cried Jessop. "Be a man now like me, and go after that watch," he exclaimed, as he turned his steps homeward.

Which of these two was the greater sinner?

Again Joy groaned as he stepped into the shadow to watch for the departure of the old man whom God had sent as a delivering angel, from the pure hills and the free air of New Hampshire.

Nor did he wait long. An old man soon appeared at one of the doors with a carpet-bag in his hand, singing in the faintest possible tone, —

> "What though the seed lie buried long,
> It shan't deceive our trust."

"What seed?" cried Joy, hardly knowing what he said.

"The prayers of the righteous dead for a wandering son," replied the old man, hardly stopping, in his haste, to look at the speaker.

When he had gone Joy stood as if paralyzed for a moment, overwhelmed by the question, "Shall I add one more to my daily sins, or shall I by one enormous crime end my sinning. I'm afraid of Jessop," he whispered, "but I'm more afraid of a holy God. Where are the prayers of the righteous dead for me?"

He walked up the alley, entered a door stealthily, and crept up-stairs, as he had done more than once before, towards the poor attic into which rum had driven Tom Lake's family.

As he passed a door that was ajar, he heard a sweet voice utter these words, and they were all he heard although a woman still went on reading, "Whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years!"

Joy halted, he turned his steps and went home, saying, "That is me whom Satan has bound, and whose fetters can never be broken!" He was thenceforth for days like the man in the iron cage, a victim of despair, and Jessop had to hear his story, although it was at the

time when his soul was bent on demolishing "that alley."

We will not portray those dreadful days, nor dwell on Satan's wiles with the prostrate man. We will only tell of the mercy of an humble woman that saved a soul from death, and of the wonder-working power of God which gave to her husband's victim the glory of bringing him to penitence and pardon.

After Jessop's visit to Mother West, of which we told our readers before, Joy was induced to go there for sympathy and advice. And he went, a most haggard and forlorn creature, with despair pictured in every line of his fine face.

"Do you know anything about God, and his Son Jesus Christ, my dear friend?" was the first question of his aged hostess.

"Yes, I was brought up in the fear of the Lord; but I have cast away fear, restrained prayer, and am given over to Satan to be bound by him forever," was the mournful answer.

"Who told you so?"

"My own heart."

"What kind of a heart have you, my friend?"

"An awful one, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," replied Joy, with deep feeling.

"And yet you take its testimony before that of a covenant-keeping God! He says though your sins be as scarlet, He will wash them away. He says whosoever cometh shall in no wise be cast out; that He came into the world to save the chief of sinners. But your poor sinful heart tells you that this is not true! Do you believe Satan is stronger than God?"

"Oh, no, I believe God has all power in heaven and on earth, and that He can save me if He will, but" —

"My son," said the old woman tenderly, "there is no 'but' in this matter. God is as willing as He is able to save you. Jesus is here beside us now, though our poor eyes see Him not, and He holds out his arms to you, His repenting child, and tells you the wounds He bore on Calvary were for you, if you will but accept His mercy. What will you do about it?"

"If I could but *know* it I would fall down

and kiss His feet and lay down my life for Him. Oh, I am so sick of sin, so hungry after holiness!" cried the wretched man.

"You do not long for Christ as He longs for you, poor child. Venture on His mercy and He will manifest Himself to you in a way which shall amaze the ungodly world. He has already humbled, and, I hope, saved through you, the man who has ruined so many; and who can tell what stores of blessed work He has laid up for you to do. Trust Him, though you should die at His feet."

And Joy replied, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

The days of miracles are not ended. Poor Joy was led by this humble woman's faith to Jesus, and saved not only from his besetting sin, but also from the temptation to commit it.

He has been for years leading an honorable Christian life, and working, as few men have ever worked, for the emancipation of slaves in his old prison-house. His testimony is this: "From the hour that, in humble penitence, I cast myself on the infinite mercy of Christ, my

desire for ardent spirit was utterly quenched, and I loathed the very smell of it. I believe a miracle as great as that on the man who dwelt among the tombs has been wrought on me. No power but God's could have done this."

This is not a base fiction. Joy is sitting to-day clothed and in his right mind, among his equals; therefore let no one limit the power of the Almighty by saying that "the confirmed drunkard is beyond hope!" The prayer of faith and the undying energy of Christian love can remove even this mountain of sin.

Oh, the wrecks that lie about us on every hand! The young, the gifted, and the beloved dashed on the rocks, and tossed among the billows! Who shall rescue them? If good and resolute men, in their lack of faith, draw back, if shrewd politicians stagger before this work, let women, strong in the might of love, take to the boats, and prove that none are lost who desire to be saved.

IX.

MISS SIBYL THORNE.

AMONG that large class whose mission seems to be keeping other folks at work, was Miss Sibyl Thorne, a lady of small property and great ambition. She could not have shone in the halls of fashion had she wanted to, but in her own circle she was bound to be felt!

She lived in a very modest house, with a little, wizened old sister, who always wore a shawl, summer and winter, and coughed incessantly, making about as much noise as a bird might be supposed to make if in a seated and lingering consumption; and crept about as softly as a mouse, always carrying her hand on her heart, and wearing a smile, for which those who knew nothing of her inner peace saw no cause.

As the ladies kept no servant, and as Miss Sibyl was always on the street or at some

public meeting, it was presumed by the neighbors that the work of the house was done by the poor little woman, who fluttered about as if determined not to die till it was all done and well done.

This home kingdom was small, but it boasted a queen and a slave; for it takes neither wealth nor blood to make an autocrat, nor yet poverty nor ignorance to make a slave.

Miss Sibyl's mission lay out-of-doors; and that settled, the conclusion was plain enough that "Miss Thorne's" lay within doors. The latter had many sick days, but that never kept her sister in. "Bed was the best place, then," she said, "and if people rang at the door they must just *ring*, that was all! They certainly could n't expect the sick to rise from their beds to let them in."

Many a time has this patient little saint craved a drink of cold water, when too ill to rise and get it, while her energetic sister — whom her acquaintances regarded as an animated subscription paper — was wearying herself and everybody else out, to buy melodeons for the Hottentots who could n't play them,

and sewing machines for cannibals who had nothing to sew! But that was consistent with Miss Sibyl's theory of an "out-of-door work."

Miss Sibyl held very decided views of her own on many points, especially on the manner of dispensing charity. No circumstances justified giving at the door, nor indeed, anywhere, personally. She was society-mad. Had you asked her for a pin, she would almost have proposed that you "wait till a society could be formed for the aid of the poor and pinless in the community."

But all the societies, to meet with her patronage and favor, must be formed on her plan and be largely under her control.

The only way then that the little imprisoned subject, Miss Thorne, ever got an opportunity to relieve her generous heart, was by beckoning to a passing baker, purchasing loaves and distributing them to hungry children, — whom she placed almost under bonds of secrecy, — in her sister's prolonged absences.

Every case of want brought to Miss Sibyl by others was "an imposition;" only those she herself discovered and dug from the mine

of woe were genuine. She seemed almost to hate those she called "irresponsible beggars."

Every year or two Miss Sibyl mounted some new hobby, rode down all opposers, and had "a smash-up," as the boys say; after which she would sink down discouraged in her efforts for the lower classes, and rest a week before setting out on a fresh campaign.

She had just given up a "Mission for Organ-Grinders," because those wandering troubadours had proved themselves ungrateful sinners; and was casting about for a new field. She was half inclined to try the monkeys, as more hopeful than their masters, when some one remarked that there was in the immediate vicinity of her own house and church a neighborhood utterly neglected by those who were compassing sea and land elsewhere to make converts to Christianity. Guptil Alley, Harper's Place, and Billiard Row, came within this precinct, and formed a dark and stormy background to the bright picture of wealth and prosperity around the fine park less than an eighth of a mile away.

The idea of there being women at her door,

who were neither Italians nor Irish, nor Catholics at all, but of her own race, who knew but did not obey the claims of the gospel, seemed new to her. She was sick of the deception and intriguing of those she had just been laboring for ; and she now mounted this new hobby with a spring! A new society must be formed at once, which she decided to call "The Mission at our Door," the motto of which should be, "Beginning at Jerusalem."

She set forth one bright morning armed with a constitution, a pledge, and a subscription paper. The first and the third were to be signed by the patrons of the work ; the second by the recipient of their bounty. Among the first she favored with a call were Mrs. Lincoln and Mary, the latter of whom was rapidly regaining her vigor, and able to bear a hand in works of charity. They signed the constitution, which provided for Sunday and sewing-schools, prayer and temperance meetings, and the paper which pledged the means to carry them on.

Then Mary suggested, — as Miss Sibyl would need so many helpers, — that she call at once on Mother West for advice and aid.

On hearing that this was a poor old woman, living in an attic of a tenement house, the lady's face expressed strong dissent from the suggestion.

Mrs. Lincoln joined her daughter in the opinion that Mrs. West and Kitty McCosh would be valuable helpers in such a mission, as Mrs. West was honored and loved by all her neighbors ; while Kitty's knowledge of every woman and girl in the neighborhood, and her magnetic power over them, would help her to fill up the school just as it did to clean and keep clean the alley which had once been a nuisance to the whole ward.

But Miss Sibyl was shocked at the thought. "These people cannot be benefited by their equals," she said. "They must look up with awe and reverence to those who work for them ; and that they will not do to the poor and ignorant like themselves."

"Mrs. West is not ignorant," said Mary. "She has influenced not only her equals, but many who are regarded as her superiors, for good. I have reason to bless her for what she has done for me ; and neither my parents nor my cousins despise her."

"I was surprised when I heard of those people coming to your house to sing," said Miss Sibyl. "There is so much danger of lifting them out of their place and making them impertinent. I have one rule with my pensioners which I never break. I will visit and relieve them; but they shall never come to my house. That is my castle, and it shall not be invaded by such people."

"Mother West will never trouble you by visits, and I advise you to call on her at once before going through our church with your paper; as everybody will suggest that the first thing," said Mrs. Lincoln.

"Well, I will call and get her to rally her neighbors for me, and perhaps make use of the girl you mention; but I certainly shall not consult them, as if my plans were not formed beyond alteration already."

Neither lady said more than to give the direction to Mrs. West's room, and to wish Miss Sibyl success in her new work, and she went her way.

She laid the plan before Mother West, after saying with the tone and the air of a patron,

"I 'm very glad, my good woman, to see your room so neat and yourself so tidy. Poverty is no excuse for filth."

A flush of color passed over the usually pale cheek of Mother West, but she took no notice of this rude remark. She simply asked the lady to be seated, remarking that this was a fine morning for a walk.

Miss Sibyl opened her plan, and Mother West listened with eager eyes, for her heart was keenly alive to the wants of the neglected poor about her.

"You will help me," said Miss Sibyl, "to gather in the women into a sewing-school, where we can give them religious instruction at the same time we teach them to make the garments we give them ?"

"Yes, I will do all in my power to help you. I will take a class, which I myself will gather, and my little friend Kitty McCosh will bring in, and look after half a dozen rude girls who have done little so far but play in the streets," was the good woman's reply.

"We probably shall not need such teachers as she," replied Miss Sibyl coldly. "My

helpers will be ladies," she added, with a look which said as plainly as words could have done it, "you and this McCosh girl are not ladies, and cannot work among them."

"Well, we will gather in the women and sit as scholars beside them, and let them see that we do not look down on them," replied Mother West, meekly.

"I can't see why they should think you would do so," said Miss Sibyl, as she drew a long ruled paper — like a petition to Congress — from the depths of her philanthropic pocket.

"This is our pledge, and I want you to sign it," she said.

"The constitution, is it?"

"No; that and the subscription paper I offer to ladies who are to support the movement with money and effort. The 'pledge' is to be signed by the women we take into the privileges of the mission." And then she went on to read a string of promises, by which the women entering the school were to bind themselves not to drink, nor swear, nor use tobacco in any form; not to sit on their doorsteps, or lean from their windows gossiping with their

neighbors; to keep their houses and their children neat, to throw no garbage in the court, and to have their husbands' or fathers' meals ready promptly when they returned from work; to attend worship regularly with their families on the Sabbath, to maintain a religious government over their children, and, in fact, to be perfect housekeepers, neighbors, mothers, — to be model Christian women! "You are willing to sign that, I suppose; and to advise your neighbors to do the same?" she asked.

"I will sign the paper saying that I will endeavor to do all this, but that will be easier for me than for most of my neighbors. Many of them are so overburdened with work for others, that it is hard to keep their own homes and little ones in order. Many of them cannot go, nor take their families to the house of God, for want of decent clothes to wear; and still more of them have no inclination to do all this paper binds them to do, and I fear would make little effort to keep such a solemn pledge."

"Then you think them beyond all hope of reform, do you?" asked Miss Sibyl, testily.

"Indeed, I do not. I have seen too great a change in many of them to be so faithless. But I think to require little at first will be the best way to gain much in the end. I would advise that all this be requested of them (as a favor to the teachers, as well as right for themselves) at their first gathering."

"Oh, I did not come to you for a plan to work by. This pledge was drawn up by myself with the sanction of three or four other philanthropic ladies, and we intend to carry it out. I came to get you to present it to your neighbors; will you do so?"

"I will see them as far as I am able, and bring them to your first meeting. Many of them are worthy women, dragged down to the dust by miserable husbands; and while they are washing by daybreak, and ironing far into the night, to buy bread for their little ones, I should hardly like to make allusion to their untidy homes, or ask them to promise to attend church regularly with their families. If I had clothing and shoes to give them all, I might feel otherwise."

"They must be very delicate for people

in their circumstances," replied Miss Sibyl, coldly.

"Some of them, who have been well brought up, are so, and their desire is to live respectably. Their self-respect is not gone, but only their inability to live in accordance with it. They are very sensitive, and shrink from the eyes of strangers. They are not all coarse and wicked women, as you will see," said Mother West.

"They must promise to come neat and clean to the sewing-school. They will be sent home at once, if they appear there otherwise," said the philanthropist, sternly.

"I think you will have no trouble on that score, madam. Kitty McCosh can suggest this, kindly, because she will help them to carry it out. She will amuse their babies, run their errands, or wash their dishes, while they are washing their gowns, aprons, and collars," said the old lady.

"Please let her do so. But, Mrs. West, you will give this McCosh girl to understand that we need nothing of her *within* the school, but to learn of her teacher," said Miss Sibyl.

"She can do great good *without*, madam; such good as few of her years ever accomplish; and I think she will work without offense to either you or to her poor neighbors," was the reply.

Miss Sibyl went away with the very uncomfortable feeling that Mother West had placed herself on a level with her, and would look on herself as one of the originators, or at least the advisers, of the movement.

"But," she said to her sister, who listened and never rebuked, "that is always the way, with such people, 'Give them an inch and they 'll take an ell.' She will soon find herself back in her own place if she tries to get up into any other."

A hall was hired, money secured; and Miss Sibyl, supported on the right and the left by kindred spirits, presented herself one day before some eighty poor women to form a sewing-school, as the first step in her work.

But, alas! she stood there like Boadicea, the warrior queen, rather than like a favored woman before her less favored sister! Their eyes quailed before her, but their hearts were

strengthened by sight of the piles of cloths and flannel which promised warmth and comfort for the coming winter. Miss Sibyl's spirit was greatly mollified by seeing Mother West, with a great buxom young girl, whom she took to be Kitty McCosh, sitting modestly among the women; and she said in her heart, "I brought her down to her right place!"

The progress of "The Mission at our Door" will be the subject of another chapter.

X.

"THE MISSION AT OUR DOOR."

A STORE, which had been altered into a hall for public evening entertainments, of the most unpretending order had been hired for Thursday afternoons. Pictures and motto cards for ornament and instruction had been hung on the walls, and a large cutting-table, and a chest for holding the materials and the work, showed that there was business as well as charity in the plan.

As is usual in all movements for "charity at home," the people responded nobly; and Miss Sibyl's purse would not contain the money she received. She had deposited some of it in the bank before the school opened, even after the doubtful expenditure of a hundred dollars for sign and banner, which might have been deferred till success was sure.

On the opening day of the school Miss Sibyl had rallied her dozen of teachers, se-

lected more for their position, we fear, than for their spirit or their zeal, and had written a note to the police station, requesting that one of the officers might meet them at the corner where they should leave respectability for squalor and vice, and follow them at a respectful distance to see that they were not annoyed by the denizens of the neighborhood; and then guard the hall while they were there.

The policemen laughed at this nonsense; "a dozen women being afraid in broad daylight, in a place where a shout could be heard in a score of groceries and workshops." But when they saw Miss Sibyl and her posse, some members of which were flounced and furbelowed, flaunting in plumes and glittering with diamonds, they "did n't wonder they wanted a guard."

The hall was half full of women whose appearance surprised, perhaps disappointed, Miss Sibyl. With half a score of miserable exceptions, the women were clean and bore no traces of vice. They were poor; some of them were oppressed and abused, and had come there for help, sympathy, and a little sun-

shine; while a few needed no help, but had joined the school to show their less fortunate neighbors that it was not "a pauper affair," as the paper which was read to them, and which very few of them had been willing to sign, had led them to suspect.

Their names and residences were all put down in a book, a step which made some of the less virtuous a little suspicious; a blue badge with "M. A. O. D." in gilt letters was pinned to their shoulders, and must be worn going and coming to the school, to let people know to whom they belonged!

One "very rough woman" declined the badge, saying she "did n't care to be collared like a dog;" while most of them accepted the harmless thing, either to wear or to carry away in their pockets.

A policeman looked in, saw no danger, and went on his round. But very soon after the opening exercises Miss Sibyl saw a mob at the door, and faces pressed up against the glass! So with two of her older helpers she went out, and in a trembling tone warned away those she had regarded as Catholic persecutors.

There was a cripple covered with shoe-strings, a little black dwarf, two or three women with babies in their arms, and half a dozen children — a formidable mob indeed!

"My good people, we have nothing to eat here, we are only teaching poor women to sew," said Miss Sibyl, in a tone which showed that she was ashamed of her foolish fears. "Go away now, go away!" she added in a coaxing voice.

"I thought this 'ad been Mrs. West's school," said the shoe-string man, "and I cam' to ask her would she haccept a gross o' shoe-strings to 'elp make 'er poor folk decent, ma'am."

"Mrs. West is only one of our scholars, good man, but if you wish to make us a donation we shall accept it very gladly," said the lady.

So the old man pulled bunch after bunch of the strings from his shoulder, over which they hung, and passed them to Miss Sibyl; who taking them, rewarded the sacrifice with, "Go away now, my good man!" And away he went.

Then the queer little black man — he whom Mother West had glorified by the name of

"Beautiful Tommy" — looked up eagerly in her face, and asked, "Has n't you got something for me to do, missus? I loves to work for de Lord."

We fear that Miss Sibyl was struck for the first time with the idea that this work was for the Lord. "You can't sew, can you, my poor fellow?" she asked.

"No, not women's way! but I can sweep and dust de hall, and run yer errands; and if dere's any woman in dar wid frettysom chil'n dat dey could n't leave to home, I 'll watch 'em on de sidewalk here."

"I can't have the school made a nursery, my poor man; but I 'll tell you what you *may* do: you may go to my house, 10 Waldron Terrace, and ask the lady there to send my reticule, which I forgot. But wait first, — how shall I know you are honest, and will bring it to me?"

"Ask Mrs. West!" cried Tommy, triumphantly. Miss Sibyl did so, and the reply was, "He's honest as the day, and one of the noblest men alive!"

Sibyl smiled, and let "the noble man" do her errand.

Scarcely had Tommy waddled off, when the thought flashed across her mind that such a strange-looking — she called it "horrid-looking" — man coming suddenly on poor, weak Miss Thorne, without any written order for the reticule, might alarm her. So in great haste she sent Kitty McCosh after him with an assurance of his good character, to her sister.

Tommy soon appeared at the school with the reticule; but Kitty was seen there no more that day.

In her usually sociable way, Kitty had stopped to make Miss Thorne a call, and give her an account of the way in which the school had been gathered in so short a time. "I thought it would take half the season to get as many women," Miss Thorne had said to Kitty. "So it would, if we had n't taken right hold and done it ourselves. Such folks are shy of ladies, especially if they think they mean to boss them," was the inelegant reply of Kitty. "One of them flared up like a rocket," she added, "because one of the ladies who visited her wanted to look into her pantry and pot-closet, and told her they should come round at odd

times and see whose house was the neatest, and give a premium. This woman is poor, but she's good, and knows a good deal. Her husband don't do right; and she's got a sick child. She said that lady talked just as the English ladies do in the story books, as if poor people were children to be watched and scolded, and had no self-respect. But I helped her 'fix up,' and Mrs. West's daughter took her sick child home for a change, and she's having a lovely time at the school! She cried when they sang the first hymn, it made her think of her old home so, and she was so glad to get out of that one dull room. I think it's real hard for any one to be good who is shut up so, and works so hard, and has nobody to love them, don't you?"

Miss Thorne sighed, and said "yes." Poor thing, although she had a neat home and plenty to eat, she could enter into the feelings of these desolate workers. She wrought more, according to her strength, and was more shut out from anything that was cheerful, than half the women in "The Mission at our Door;" and she had n't the poor relief that most of them had in "scolding out their troubles."

"I like you better than your sister," said Kitty, innocently, gazing into Miss Thorne's kind eyes. "Why don't you come to the school to teach?"

"That shows how little you know of us, my child," said Miss Thorne. "My sister is always on the wing, blessing somebody; but I'm a poor, frail creature, scarcely able to take care of myself. When the little work of the house is done (or rather half done, for I never finish it to my view), I'm worn out, and ready for bed. So I can do little for myself or anybody else. These parlors should have been swept to-day; but I did n't feel quite equal to the effort."

"Where's your broom?" cried Kitty, springing from her chair and turning up the skirt of her pink calico gown. "How I should love to sweep such a handsome carpet!"

"Oh, we could n't do that in the afternoon! Some one might ring while we were all in confusion," said Miss Thorne.

"Well, if they did we would n't let them in," replied Kitty, innocently; for she did not know that half the rings at that door were never answered!

Before poor little Miss Thorne could rally force to resist, Kitty had found the broom and was calling for sheets to cover the fine things, — for plain as they seemed to Miss Sibyl, they were very grand in poor Kitty's eyes.

That carpet had not felt such a vigorous hand for many a year ; and when Miss Thorne, who had been banished from the dust, was called back, she could hardly believe that the work was well done. But on examining, as she was urged to do, every nook and cranny, she was satisfied.

Next came the silk duster, the feather brush, and the other devices which the prim little lady had for ferreting out every particle of dust ; and soon piano, sofas, chairs, tables, what-nots, and their burden of knickknacks all shone with new brightness ; and yet Kitty was as fresh as if just from her humble pillow.

"There!" she exclaimed, "this is just the way I fix up our neighbors when they are busy or sick ; only," she added, recollecting herself, "they have n't half such nice things to fix with. Is n't there anything else you want done ?"

"Not to-day, thank you, unless on your way

home you would just carry a red flannel night-gown I've been making to a poor child in Apple Street, — but then, if you did, I'd like you never to mention it. The child's mother is a poor, shiftless creature, and might keep it comfortable if she would. Some people think shiftless folks ought not to be helped, but surely their poor children ought not to suffer. But don't tell of this."

"I'll carry it, and maybe I might draw the sick child out in a wagon some day; sick children get so tired of the house! I draw Jane Carr's baby round to pay for the use of her wagon to draw other babies in."

"But don't you go to school, or have anything to do, child?" asked Miss Thorne.

"Oh yes, I go to school, and earn nearly all my own clothes beside, by sewing buttons on to cards. But I do this in my play time," said Kitty.

When Kitty went away, Miss Thorne could not help pressing a kiss on her hard, rosy cheek, and as she did so she slipped a bright hair-ribbon into her hand, saying, "I shall want you to come again, for you've made me

feel as if I had been to your home and among your neighbors. I almost feel as if I had helped in cleaning up Guptil Alley! The next time you draw out a baby, bring it here to see me. Good-by! God bless you, my dear, good child!"

When Kitty had deposited her red flannel night-gown, she looked at the great clock in the tower of St. John's church, and saw to her amazement that the afternoon was nearly gone. So she ran home to her buttons, quite as bright and happy as if she had been all the time at "The Mission at our Door."

When tea was over she went into Mrs. West's to get the news from the school.

"Why, Kitty, child, what became of you?" asked her friend.

Oh, I ran an errand, you know," replied Kitty, laughing. "What for a school did you have?"

"A very pleasant one. The ladies sang and talked very kindly to us; but when they began to cut work, they did n't know how, poor things! A garment for a woman had sleeves for a child; and the skirts had bands big enough to take in

two women at once. But they saw it; and one of them said she would hire a dressmaker to come with her next time! I volunteered as modestly as I could to help that young lady with the bird in her hat, and she was very glad. They all saw I was at home with my scissors, and they asked me to be one of their cutters," replied Mother West.

"Then you shall have your name down among the grand ones," cried Kitty. "You shall not do the work and give them all the credit!"

"Little I care for that, Kitty; but I think if I'm there at the cutting-table the poor miserable ones will feel freer than if they had to go to one of those fine ladies, who knows poverty and sorrow only by name. But where have you been, child, that you did not come back?"

"I've been away forming myself a new 'Mission at our Door,'" replied Kitty, laughing; "but I can't tell you where."

XI.

MISS SIBYL AND MRS. CLAPPER.

THE glory of "The Mission at our Door," like that of the mission for organ grinders, had faded before Miss Sibyl Thorne's eye, and its poetry turned to sober prose, before the spring term closed.

At the last session that lady laid out her grievances in due form before the women, expressing more than a doubt as to whether they would ever gather there again in the same capacity.

"The ladies," she said, "are thoroughly disheartened by the disrespect of some of the women, the greediness of others. One woman had addressed her as 'You dear soul;' another had demanded a dark calico dress in place of the pink one offered her; a third had taken offense when questioned about not keeping her home in better order; and several had mani-

fested a spirit of independence quite ridiculous in persons needing help."

Miss Sibyl also said that it had been her intention to shake hands with every woman at parting; but she did not feel that their conduct as a whole would entitle them to that act of friendship!

If this had been a gathering of oppressed laborers' wives and paupers in England, and Miss Sibyl had been a patronizing duchess, it might have passed off very well. But there is in the breast of the poorest American woman a feeling of self-respect which cannot be crushed out by the gift of a new gown or a bag of flour. These words were as a match to the magazine of pride in a score of poor hearts there, which manifested itself in different ways according to the temperament of the women.

Several of them cried and sobbed as if their hearts were sorely wounded; but others spoke to their neighbors words of defiance and scorn. "'Deed then, nobody axed her to bring us here to taach us to sew and to sing!" cried an angry Hibernian, adding, "She's not such a dale richer nor we, but only a dale prouder!"

"Ye're right," replied her neighbor, with a scornful laugh. "They says that she kapes no gerl any more than ourselves, only she's got an angel of a poor sick sister as drudges for her, and that's why her house is in better order than ours is! Small bit o' a lady is she!"

"I wish from my heart I had never accepted the cloth I have made up here, and if my life is spared I'll return it," said a hard-working Yankee woman in an indignant tone. "I'm poor but I'm honest, and no one shall twit my boys of having a beggar for a mother!"

"I'm glad the school is done, for I'm sick of being called 'My good woman" as if I had n't any name," said another poor, crushed-looking American woman. "The cloth I made up came from Miss Lincoln — there she comes now; look! on the platform — see, she's taking off her gloves to play for us!"

There was a group on the platform discussing the best way to quell the confusion, while Miss Sibyl, thoroughly disheartened, had sunk on to the sofa in tears, sobbing, "This is all the thanks I've got for all my toil!"

Just then a tall, fair-haired woman rose and

asked if she might say a few words. "Certainly," said two or three voices from the platform, among which were those of Mary Lincoln and Mother West, the latter of whom had now by her skill and good judgment taken her place among "the ladies."

"The friend who wishes to speak is Mrs. Clapper, a neighbor of mine and a friend of this school," Mrs. West said, in a tone low and yet distinctly heard all over the hall.

Then Mrs. Clapper said, "I am the woman who asked for a dark calico in place of a pink one; and I wish to say there was no insolence meant by that request. I wanted to have a gown I could work in, after giving so many hours to making it. I have much to thank this school for, and so have many others who may forget it now.

"I once had a good home and loving friends far up among the White Hills. I taught the village school and was beloved by all my scholars; and their parents little dreamed that ever I should live in one room in Guptil Alley! I took one false step and that led me into darkness. I thought every other step was down;

and I fought against all my surroundings to avoid going down still further, and to keep my child from being dragged down. I forgot that the same step on the ladder which led me down was there to lead me up, if I turned and put my foot upon it. When my good neighbor, Mrs. West, asked me in to her little meetings, I would not go; I never went to any meeting lest it would remind me of old days and make me wild; but I had no fear of a school where I could be helped to clothes, and find sympathy, and have two cheerful hours in the week. This school has been a great blessing to me, and I know it has been the same to others. I hope it will not be given up. If one lady is discouraged, all need not be! Let these ladies agree to hold on, and many of the poorest women here will lend their help. I am skillful with my needle and my shears, and I will cut work half a day every week, if I sit up by night to make up my time on my poorly paid sewing. The kind words I have had from some ladies here have lifted me into life and hope again; and I want to work here for others just like myself. I had almost forgotten there was a God,

when, on the first opening of this school, we sang, —

> 'One there is above all others
> Well deserves the name of friend;'

and I want to hear more of Him here, and to return to Him, and to do some good in the world. I cannot tell these ladies how grateful I am for their kindness; but I cannot believe it is wise in any of them to go to the homes of the poor and pry into all their little affairs, as some of these women say ladies do. If they get lessons of order and neatness here, they will practice them at home. I, who live among them, see the change already."

Both platform and benches were pleased and pacified by Mrs. Clapper's remarks; and her neighbors whispered, "She and Mrs. West is friends we need not be ashamed to own. They're as wise as the ladies themselves."

Kitty McCosh had kept up her private ministry over Miss Thorne's affairs; and by a silent understanding it had remained a secret between them. Miss Thorne had once told Kitty that if she could only ride there, nothing would please her better than going to the

school regularly, if only to look and smile on those poor disheartened toilers. Kitty had told this to Miss Mary Lincoln, and she now volunteered to bring Miss Thorne to the school every week the coming year. Miss Thorne could open the school as none of the others could, and they would relieve her of all work.

A new committee was chosen, with the gentle Miss Thorne at its head, although Miss Sibyl declared that if the women treated her sister as they had done herself, they would kill her in a month.

Mrs. West's daughter and Mrs. Clapper were put upon the cutting committee, and Mrs. West and Kitty McCosh were appointed visitors, because they knew the women who ought to be gathered in; Mary Lincoln and some three or four other young girls who had access to large purses at home volunteered to supply materials for the next year, and to help such as really needed help, in other ways.

The poor women, hearing this, settled down again in their seats, their faces bright with smiles, one of their number remarking, "It is just an old angel Mrs. West is and a young

one yon Miss Lincoln is." Singing and playing cheered their hearts, and they were all nearly as happy as if no squall had struck their little bark, when a colored man came in, laden with flowers from Mr. Lincoln's conservatory. There was a bouquet for every woman there, and a little parian vase to hold it.

Neither bread nor garments could have done the work of those flowers just then. They were a proof that Mary Lincoln, at least, acknowledged that the women were something more than beggars, — that they were sisters with tastes like her own.

Miss Sibyl relented, and at the parting, as the women filed past the desk to shake hands with the other ladies, she gave them her hand, remarking now and then that she hoped they would not kill her poor sister next winter, and also that she was about to open a day mission for the babies of working women, — babies were never ungrateful or independent, — and that if any of them wished their infants taken care of while out washing, they could get their names recorded by calling on Miss Cutler, at 7 Downer Avenue. Another "society" had taken possession of the poor woman's brain!

"The Mission at our Door" would have fallen dead, had not others now taken it in charge. As it was, it lives and thrives.

Its work was not laid aside even then, to wait for autumn winds to blow it into life again. The constitution was changed and shortened, and the helpers were brought into a closer and more sisterly relation to each other. There was no longer a lady patroness on one side, and washer-women, drunkards' wives, and thriftless mothers on the other. They were favored Christian women aiding, cheering, and blessing unfortunate and erring sisters. The helpers visited and wrought for those who needed assistance all through the summer; and many a poor attic was exchanged for a tidy chamber; many a distracted mother encouraged to new hope and energy; and more than one led from vice to virtue. And as Jesus wrought among and with the lowly, so these blessed women are working to-day in His spirit; and "The Mission at our Door" is a blessing to the city whose fair daughters sustain it, as well as a means of leading many of that neglected class, "the poor and proud," into the new and nobler life in Christ.

XII.

THE LANDLORD.

TWO gentlemen were sitting one evening before a glowing fire in a richly furnished library, talking on business matters. One of them was a fine-looking elderly person, with flowing locks touched with silver, and kind gray eyes whose glance disproved the charge of heartlessness, so commonly laid at the door of the very rich.

His companion was a much younger man, tall, pale, and with a shadow of sadness almost painful on his fine face.

When account-books and papers were laid aside the old gentleman said kindly, " Sit down, Mr. Joy. I want to ask you two or three questions about this change in Guptil Alley. Ever since I have held real estate, I have noticed that when a piece of property began to run down, there was no use in trying to help it. Down it would go, just as sure as a ball

would from the house-top; every change of tenants was for the worse, worthy mechanics and honest laborers fleeing from their coarse new neighbors, and leaving room for more of the same class. I have been actually ashamed of being known as the owner of Guptil Alley, and was about putting the place under the auctioneer's hammer, when that marvelous child came here urging me to sustain her in her efforts at cleaning and keeping it clean! I painted and papered and set glass, hoping against hope, mainly to please her, for I never saw such good sense and energy combined in any young person before. I said to her, after promising to aid her, 'My child, you can't work miracles!'"

"'Yes, sir, I can,' she said. 'Mother West works miracles, and if I'm as good and as lovin' as she, I can work them too! You should see the swearin' men that pray now, and the careless women that are neat and tidy.' And so she went on, with her eyes and cheeks glowing. I really believe the child has accomplished her work. I never was so astonished in my life, as at the change in that place. It is

true, as you say, that my property has grown in value since Mrs. West moved there, and I shall cheerfully accede to your wishes in this matter. When Blaine moves out, you may have the parlors of that house remodeled so as to please the people, for hall or chapel — as you please to call it. Put in a desk, a clock, good gas-fixtures, and make it attractive for their schools, concerts, and temperance-meetings ; all of which I shall gladly help to sustain. Yes, Mr. Joy," continued the landlord, laying his hand kindly on the shoulder of the other, and looking in his face, "there have indeed been miracles wrought among my poor tenants and their neighbors!"

"Among which my case is the chief!" exclaimed Mr. Joy ; "a miracle of grace!"

"Yes, I never saw such a transformation ; and I can truly say I rejoice in it as if you were my own son. Ah! Joy, your father and I had many merry, happy days together. I had often thought of trying to save you for his sake. But your case was so hopeless. I had no heart to begin ; and so I never did," said the landlord.

"And God saved me through one or two humble women and this poor child. Are you willing, sir, to tell me what prompted you to send for me and trust me with business before I was hardly out of the slough where I had lain chained for years?"

"Certainly. As I told you, my heart had often ached for the honor of my friend, and I desired to lift you up, but did not know how to begin.

"One night this Kitty McCosh came here again to tell me the success of her efforts — how many bushels of oyster-shells and other trash, and how many dead kittens she had scraped up and carried off after the loose work of the tenants, and how that miserable fellow who sold liquor in the cellar of No. 3 had moved for want of customers. She sat here as much at her ease as if she were my daughter, neither surprised nor dazzled by anything she saw here.

"After a few moments she said, 'Has n't there been half-miracles in Guptil Alley, sir?' I said, 'Yes, my child, there have, most certainly.'

"Then she said, 'and, sir, there's going to be a *whole* miracle soon — like healin' the withered hand, bringin' a mad body to his right mind, or raisin' the widow o' Nain's son. I suppose ye've read o' 'em in the Bible, sir? Would ye like a hand in the great work the Lord is doin' among us?'

"The child startled me! I asked her what she meant, and she said, 'Why, sir, the Lord has come and is goin' to save Mr. Joy, the poor, dear lawyer! Mother West has taken him by the hand and carried him to Jesus to be put in his right mind; and He'll do it; for He does everything she asks Him to do. We must all strive for a share o' the blessin'; but I'm so young and so poor that I can do naught but pray for him, and plead with ye, sir. Ye've always spoke so pleasant to me that I thought I'd like to give ye a share in the blessin'. It would be such an honor from God, ye know, to help Mother West.' I declare to you, Joy, I did not know whether to laugh or cry; so I did a little of both, and asked, 'How can I help her, child?'

"'I'll tell you,' she said. 'You know the

surest way to keep Satan off is to be ever busy. Now, beside needin' a way to earn his bread, dear Mr. Joy must have work o' some kind for this end. You have just stores o' riches, and heaps o' business. As your agent is goin' to other work, I thought perhaps Mr. Joy could collect your rents and look after us all — that we do right. Indeed, sir, we'd all try so hard to do right, and to help him, that ye'd have forty agents, while only payin' one, and ye'd have a blessin' yerself; and who can tell but ye would be converted — though ye be so rich and fine!'

"Joy, I actually felt as if I had been left out when all my poor tenants were receiving such blessings; and as I looked in that child's face, I saw that she pitied me! I felt that I wanted what she called the 'blessin',' so I sent for you, and the result is, that to-day you have most of my affairs in your hands, and that I am perfectly satisfied with you — if not with myself," said the gentleman.

"Why not with yourself, sir?" asked Joy, modestly.

"Oh, Joy, I can't feel that I have ever re-

ceived 'the blessing' that poor child half promised me. As for this world, I am rich: and I know I am not covetous. But still the cares of riches crush my spirit, and make me restless and uneasy. I wish I knew how to rise above this."

"Get rid of some of your money, dear sir," said Mr. Joy. "I could show you a woman in one of your tenement houses, whose whole property is not worth a hundred dollars, and who is yet happier than a queen. Oh, the brightness of the crown that is awaiting her! The richest woman might envy her. She has the world and its vanities under her feet, and lives in a region of peace almost as serene as that she is looking for beyond. And yet she enjoys the beautiful things of earth as much, and indeed, far more, than do many whose only portion is here. The simplest flower is a delight to her; and she spends her leisure in training such as she can buy at the stalls, around her window, and over her few little pictures. Those flowers are in such contrast with their poor surroundings that they seem to me the most beautiful I have ever seen. One never sees her poverty."

"That woman is indeed a 'miracle-worker,'" said the landlord. "She turns sinners into saints, changes the abodes of vice and sorrow into homes of the virtuous poor, and transforms her own poverty into true riches. I have often thought of going to her room, but feared lest she might think I came only as a patron. She has never asked any favor of me, and I should not like to appear as if offering any; and yet I want greatly to see her and learn the secret of her peace."

"I will go with you, sir, if you wish," replied Joy. "You need offer her no personal favor; but you can give her something, if you please, for poor Tommy and her other pensioners."

"Does that black dwarf pay his rent?" asked the landlord.

"Yes, sir, by the help of his neighbors. I took him out of the cellar and placed him in an attic. His rheumatism gave way at once; and I think he will soon be at his little jobs again," said Mr. Joy.

"Do you think the fellow is really able to earn a living, Joy?" asked the landlord.

"Hardly, sir. Both he and the shoe-string peddler work far beyond their strength. They say if it were not for their rent they could get on very well. They put the first of their earnings away for that; and then get food and clothes if they can," replied Mr. Joy.

"Who took care of them when they were ill?"

"Mrs. West and her daughter, and two or three other poor women agreed to make their gruel and broth, and Kitty McCosh went in every day and made their beds and 'tidied up their rooms,' with her button-bag jingling before her, bustling about and singing till they quite forgot their pains in their delight at her kindness."

"Joy, that one penniless child has done more for the world than I with all my wealth have done. Come, let us go and see how to get rid of this weight of care that is keeping down my spirits and clogging my feet. We'll make the case of these two old men our ostensible errand, and hear what this saint has to say."

During the visit of the landlord to his ten-

ant, there was no affectation of condescension on one side, nor of spiritual superiority on the other. The two conversed on topics of general interest; then about the tenants in the alley, their present wants, and their recent improvement. This last subject led the landlord to remark: "I have other property where my tenants are too much as these were before this great change came over them. How can I bring about the same results for them?"

"I cannot tell what you can do, personally, further than to repair their homes, and deal kindly with them," was the reply.

"How have you, who could not do even this, accomplished so much for the people here?" asked the landlord.

"I have been one among them; I have loved them, and done all that this love prompted. A mother could hardly tell you in a word how she brought up her children to virtue and usefulness. She loves them, and every act and word of hers goes to make up the influence that moulds their character," replied Mother West.

"Does this mighty change come over every-

body you love and labor for?" asked the old gentleman, respectfully.

"It would be great presumption in me to say so; and yet I must magnify the faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God, by telling you that He has given me the desire of my heart in almost every instance here. I truly believe that with all my frailties and sins, I am one of those who fear God, and He tells us that His secret is with such. I never doubt His promise when I see work to be done for Him, and for some erring child of His. When I see the work, I almost see its accomplishment; and so I work on in trust," replied Mother West.

"I hope you realize that the poor and degraded are not the only ones who have a claim on those whose prayers are heard," said the landlord.

"They are too often the only ones humble enough to feel the need of God's pity and mercy, sir," replied the good woman. "The old illustration of the camel and the needle's eye has lost none of its force. The rich have great odds against them in the matter of salvation, sir; the 'whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.'"

There was silence for a moment. The rich man was not quite humble enough to say to that poor woman, "I am sick, and poor, and in need of your pity and your prayers." He turned for relief to what he could do for himself; and said, "Mrs. West, my friend, Mr. Joy, tells me how needy those two old pensioners of yours are; and I came to say to you that they shall never be pressed for their rent. Mr. Joy may give you six receipted bills, for a month's rent, each, to be used at your discretion. If they are able, let them pay their rent; but when they have been ill or unfortunate in their work, give them a receipt. Do you know any one else who needs the same favor occasionally?" he asked, sincerely hoping she would put in her own claim.

"No, sir, I do not. The people are all poor, but they have work and can get on when well. I believe the worst thing we can do for one not really in want is to encourage a spirit of dependence. Should any such case occur, I will let you know it, and feel very grateful to you for any help you may give."

"Thank you, Mrs. West," replied the land-

lord rising to go; then breaking off a large leaf from a thrifty rose geranium on the window-sill, he asked, "Can I do anything for you, personally?"

"I think of nothing now, sir," was the reply. "I thank you very much for this call and for your interest in my poor neighbors. Can I do anything for you, sir?"

The calm assurance and the tender tone of the poor woman startled the rich man, and threw him off his guard. "Yes, madam," he replied, "do for me just what you have done for these poor people; love me, pity me, and do all for me that love and pity prompt. Good-night. Mr. Joy will tell you to-morrow what I have said about a place for your schools and your meetings."

The landlord and his business-man walked on in silence till they came to the house of the former, where they parted with only a "Good-night." Each was buried in his own thoughts.

XIII.

TAKING CARE OF THEMSELVES.

THE great object of Christian charity, after relieving present absolute want, is to teach people to take care of themselves; and whoever fails in this, no matter how great his sacrifices or how princely his gifts, does a wrong, not only to the recipient, but also to society at large.

This was the principle on which Mother West wrought in her humble way, and although she had neither silver nor gold to bestow, her record will shine like the sun when that of many a "princely donor" shall have faded utterly away.

Passing through the heart of the city where this good woman pursued her modest work, you will come upon a park surrounded by fine dwellings whose owners still cling to them, although the fashionable rich have long ago fled to the new parts of the city, set up shining

coaches and shinier coachmen, and draped themselves with laces and hung out diamonds, as signs of their wealth. Behind one of these blocks is an alley occupied by a tidy and generally prosperous class of laboring people who in no way annoy or incommode their genteel neighbors. At the head of this place, — once Guptil Alley, — and plainly seen from the public street, stands a house whose lower floor is a chapel. Over the door is an iron arch supporting a large lamp, on the front pane of which may be seen, in gilt letters, the words " Mission at our Door."

For the name of the place we may thank Miss Sibyl Thorne. For the seed sown in prayer and faith and deep sacrifice, and for the fair harvest it has yielded, we must thank Mother West.

Ask the poor cripple who takes care of the chapel and who loves the very dust on its walls, about the work there, and he will reply, as he has to others, with a smile of gratitude on his weather-beaten face, " I 'll tell ye, sir, this place be a miracle, a grace and mercy. Ten year ago I lived at number six alone, cookin' my bit

o' food and eatin' it as thoughtless o' God as the dog that eat my crumbs. I mended my own poor clothes by night, and by day stood on a street corner sellin' shoe-strings to passers-by. I thought there was neither man nor woman in all the wide world as cared whether I lost my soul or no. But the Lord have His eye on me all the time, and He send this blessed woman as we calls Mother West to me; and from the hour she took me by the hand my clouds all fled away and I come out into such sunlight as you never beheld! Since that there have never been a cloud nor a nightfall for me nor for scores more like me; and now we're a 'appy flock o' neighbors.

"After that, sir, a fine lady took 'old o' us and was goin' to — well, sir, I don't just know what she was goin' to do with us, and I doubt me if she knew herself! But she talked to the poor honest things here as if they were all pick-pockets and villyans; whereas quite a many o' 'em were poor, heart-broken dears, toilin' day and night to keep their children off the city and out o' the way o' sin — for, sir, a body may be starvin' poor and yet not be villainous! She

grew weary, and our dear mother took the work. When the great day come, sir, there 'll be both high and low in the vast crowd that 'll strive hard to get a hold o' one corner o' Mother West's mantle — not a poor faded black thing such as she wear now, but one as shall shine as the light — white, like the righteousness of the saints."

And if you ask him who now keeps up this work, he will reply : —

" It 's well, sir, we all put a 'and to it ; but the Lord He stand at the 'elm and guide the bark, and get all the glory to 'imself. I tell ye, sir, when the grand and lofty comes to the Lord, they halways 'ang on to the notion a bit that the Lord do be under some hobligation to them for their condescension ; but when them comes that 's so far down as they can't get no lower, and has nothin' but sin and weakness to hoffer Him, they lays low and leans on 'im alone and don't hoffer 'im no compliments. We has one gentleman as sort of leads hoff, but 'e's the 'umblest of us hall — Mr. Joy, a lawyer. He was once forsook of all men — even of his-self. I need n't bring up ould scores ag'in when

the Lord 'ave blotted them all out. He are our leader in all that are good ; but he hold his 'ead very low and walk softly before the Lord."

If you ask who supports the place, he will say, reverently, —

" The Lord do it, sir, and in 'is love He lets us 'elp 'im a bit. The dear lan'lord do give us this place free o' rent ; and the servants o' the Lord do come one and another of a Sabbath and speak words o' comfort and instruction to us. Then we 'ave 'elpers as the Lord 'as given us, with money. Mr. Lincoln's family, mostly yon lovely Miss Mary ; and a fine young gentleman of a cousin ; and a dear lady, Miss Thorne, and another Miss Bell ; and they come 'ere and teach us of a Sunday out o' the gospel. But, sir, if ye 'll no take it for consate, I 'll say that there be among ourselves many as the Lord honors. There be one poor black fellow we calls ' Brother Tommy,' that labor more for the poor and their Master than do a dozen common Christians. And hand in hand with Mother West is a maid they call Kitty McCosh, who has such a winning-like way that she seem to 'ave the purse-strings o' the rich in her fin-

gers! And she labor and bear other people's burdens and keep folk at peace and at work in a way that are marvelous! We just puts hand in hand and shoulder to shoulder and 'elps each other, and it's just wonderful 'ow that lightens loads all round! Hif Brother Tommy are ill, I does 'is work; hif I am lower than common, 'e starts hoff with the shoe-strings. Hif one of us is hout o' coal the others are not; and sometimes I fancy that we are much like the 'postolic church of hold, we 'as hall things in common.

"My experience in good things are small, but I see plain that there be ways o' doin' good that bring evils with 'em. It 's better to *cure* a cripple than to carry him, or to cut his legs off and make 'im still more a cripple. There be hunfortunate folk, who, hif ye feed 'em once will sit starin' at ye with their mouth open the rest o' their life, waitin' to be fed forever. And there they will sit till they gets the palsy o' laziness fast on 'em, and be a curse to their-selves and the community,—for the folk as eats up other folk are the most 'opeless class on God's earth! We in this neighborhood 'ave

'ad 'elp enough to ruin us, only for the wisdom o' our Mother West, as put us on our honor and bid us refuse a copper we could do without, either for ourselves or our mission! That it 'elps us to keep our self-respect and not to go whinin' about like born beggars. It would just surprise ye to see 'ow respectful these 'elpers be to the poorest o' us! They sees that we strive to bear our hown burdens, and so they take hold o' a corner of 'em and give us a lift very cheerful.

"There 's a screw loose in the charity o' fine folk in general. They are too hapt to take up the poor bodily and carry 'em till they 've lost the use o' their limbs (or what 's the same, the will to work), and then they drop them sudden to the ground and are surprised because they are worse off than they were afore!"

The questions involved in the subject of charity are many and intricate. Perhaps we may learn something from these humble creatures in "Mission Place," who, had they simply been fed and clothed by Miss Sibyl Thorne's patronage, would still have been the denizens

of "Guptil Alley," as they were before its name and character were changed.

It may be wise in some of us who are working in this broad field to go to Mother West, Kitty McCosh, "Beautiful Tommy," and the shoe-string peddler for instruction.

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